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Letter from the Editor



June Hetzel (Biola University, La Mirada, California, United States)

June Hetzel, Ph.D., earned her Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate School. She currently serves as the Dean of Education at Biola University in La Mirada, California. Dr. Hetzel has served in public, private, homeschooling, and international educational settings. She is passionate about the role of the Christian educator to live a Spirit-led life in right relationship with God and others, and the centrality of the gospel message as the central hope of all educational endeavors.

Justice, The Gospel, and People with Disabilities



David W. Anderson (Crossing Bridges, Inc.; Woodinville, Washington, United States)

David W. Anderson (BA, Gordon College; MEd, Temple University; EdD, Univ of North Dakota; Certificate in Theological Studies, Bethel Seminary) is Emeritus Professor of Education at Bethel University, St. Paul, MN. He has authored articles and given presentations at globally related to special education or disability ministry, most recently *Toward a Theology of Special Education: Integrating Faith and Practice* (WestBow Press). He is President of *Crossing Bridges Inc.*, whose mission is to bring light and hope to people with disabilities and their families in developing nations.

*Helping the Poor and Needy Through Education:
Examining the Similarities Between Poverty Education
Research and Orphan Education*



Calvin Roso (Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, United States)

Taking the Good News to the far reaches of the world is Dr. Calvin Roso's (EdD Oral Roberts University) passion. For the past summers, he has traveled with teenagers to Latin American countries where they have delivered rice, beans, and the gospel to the poverty stricken people in cities and mountain villages. Dr. Roso has been involved in Christian education since the early 1990s, active in the professional development of Christian educators through the International Christian Accrediting Association (ICAA), an organization associated with ORU. In addition, he has published several teachers' guides and numerous articles regarding curriculum and instruction.

*An Introduction to the Twisselmann and Draycott
Articles*



Tim Stranske (Biola University, La Mirada, California, United States)

Tim Stranske (BA Biola University, PhD Claremont Graduate University) was born and Khartoum, Sudan, raised and educated in the 50's and 60's, and has a heart for Africans. After spending 28 years as a teacher and administrator in preschool-12 schools, Tim began working at Biola University full-time in 2003. He teaches educational psychology and philosophy of education at Biola University and serves as the Assistant Dean of their School of Education.

Truth, Justice or the American Way?



Eric Twisselmann (Biola University, La Mirada, California, United States)

Eric Twisselmann earned his BA in English at Biola University ('95) and his MA in the Philosophy of Religion and Ethics from Talbot School of Theology (2003). Eric has taught high school for the last 16 years at La Serna High

School in Whittier, where he teaches English literature and philosophy. He has also taught philosophy as an adjunct lecturer at Biola University for the past 10 years. He and his wife Mandi (Biola class of '97) live in La Mirada and are the proud parents of 4 beautiful children. They are active members of Grace EV Free Church in La Mirada.

The American Way to Choose Ice Cream



Andy Draycott (Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California, United States)

The reality of being known and loved by God in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and being bound into creaturely fellowship sustained by the hope of eternal life, fuels Dr. Draycott's (PhD, University of Aberdeen) delight in teaching theology under the authority of Scripture. He comes to Biola having taught Christian Ethics and Theology of Mission in Aberdeen, Scotland. He is passionate about understanding church life and especially preaching as engaged publically for the glory of God and the mission of his Kingdom. Teaching undergraduates across the whole range of disciplines at Biola is a providentially appointed setting for theology that loves the diversity of callings, gifts and mutual ministry in the church. Dr. Draycott enjoys time with his family, laughing with friends, cycling and playing soccer, watching cricket and rugby, and reading for pleasure and learning.

Book Review: Jesus for Revolutionaries (Robert Chao Romero)



Natalie M. Anna (Biola University, La Mirada, California, United States)

Natalie M. Anna (BA Biola University) is a current Biola University student, working on her MAEd with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction. Her research interests lie in elementary education, intercultural studies, social justice, parent engagement, and bridging the gap for underprivileged students. She is passionate about being a Christ-following teacher in the public school setting. A southern California native, she has travelled in India and is currently studying in Vienna, Austria.



Robert Chao Romero (University of California, Los Angeles; Los Angeles, California, United States)

Professor Robert Chao Romero considers himself fortunate to be able to study himself for a living. With a Mexican father from Chihuahua and a Chinese immigrant mother from Hubei in central China, Romero's dual cultural heritage serves as the basis for his academic studies. His research examines Asian immigration to Latin America, as well as the large population of "Asian-Latinos" in the United States. His first book, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (2010), tells the forgotten history of the Chinese community in Mexico. For his next project, Romero has begun research on the history of Mexican segregation in the United States and the important, but much overlooked Mexican desegregation cases of *Doss v. Bernal* (1943), *Lopez v. Seccombe* (1944), and *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946). Before he joined the UCLA César E. Chávez Department Chicana/o Studies in 2005, Romero was a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the UCLA Department of History and School of Law. He is also a former Ford Foundation Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellow. Romero received his J. D. from UC Berkeley and his Ph.D. in Latin American history from UCLA.

Book Review: Transformation of the Different Other *(Faustin Ntamushobora)*



Kay Henry (Biola University, La Mirada, California, United States)

Kay is office manager at Biola University's School of Education and is presently pursuing her Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies at Biola University. She is passionate about celebrating diversity and new beginnings since her walk with Jesus began at age 38. She grew up in rural Nebraska and holds a bachelor's degree from Doane College (Crete, Nebraska). Kay moved to Los Angeles as a single mom of three in her early twenties. Kay's research interests include issues of race and ethnicity, challenges faced by multiracial families, and learning about the theology of Ubuntu as it relates to the importance of community.



Faustin Ntamushobora (Africa International University, Nairobi, Kenya)

Trained by his father to be a tribal priest, Faustin became a follower of Christ after witnessing the transformation of his mother into a woman of extreme grace by Jesus Christ. His faith and that of his wife, Salome, were further deepened in Christian colleges in Congo, Rwanda and Kenya. Their faith was intensely refined during the genocide of 1994 and afterward when they lost relatives in the war in Congo in 1997. Surprising opportunities arose for Faustin to serve with African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM) which led ultimately to him earning a Ph.D. in Educational Studies at Biola University in California and to found Transforming Leaders Africa (tlafrica.com), which exists to come alongside African pastors to encourage their personal transformation and to provide tools for them to encourage the transformation of brothers and sisters in their churches.. Faustin and Salome's four children are all pursuing higher education: Pelagie earned a BA at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya; Jean Pierre

studies at Moody Bible Institute; Jean Paul has been accepted to the University of Texas, Arlington (UTA); Gentile studies nursing in Forth Worth, Texas.



Spring 2014

Dear Colleagues in Christ,

We hope you will find our second issue of the *Justice, Spirituality, and Education Journal* enriching, engaging, and thought-provoking. We wish to acknowledge our founding editor, Dr. Fred Ramirez; the School of Education team; our [advisory and editorial boards](#), and especially the authors for their thoughtful contributions to this issue.

“STRENGTH TOGETHER” JSE CONFERENCE:

We hope to see you at our next [Justice, Spirituality, and Education Conference](#) on Saturday, **November 15, 2014**. Our theme will be ***strength together***, calling us to remain in a posture of humility as we learn from the different other. Our [keynote speakers](#) will be **Dr. Michael Mata**, Adjunct Professor of Urban Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, and **Dr. Judy TenElshof**, Professor of Spirituality and Marriage & Family, Talbot School of Theology.

JSE CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS:

We invite scholars and graduate students to present on the following topics:

- Building Community
- Appreciating Diversity Across Class, Race, Ethnic and Gender Boundaries
- Culture, Spirituality and Education
- Pursuit of Justice in Academics
- Justice, Spirituality & Education in the Arts
- Christians in Action

Papers and/or presentations are due September 1, 2014 and should support conference presentations. Papers should be submitted as articles in APA format, no longer than 20 pages, following [JSE Journal Submission Guidelines](#) and need to distinctly address the intersection of justice, spirituality, and education or delve deeply into a core issue in one of these domains. To submit your paper for the 2014 JSE Conference, click [here](#).

We look forward to seeing you November 15, 2014 for the next [JSE Conference](#), where we consider the theme of ***strength together*** on Biola University's campus in La Mirada, California.



As we launch this second issue of the JSE Journal, we want to recognize the diligent work of School of Education alumna and fifth grade teacher Lori Clock (BA '85, MSC '86), who was recently honored with the California Teacher's Association's Lois Tinson Human Rights Award for her orphanage work in Kenya and awareness raising on her Gardenhill Elementary School campus in La Mirada, California. Recipients of this award are honored for those "activities [that] have helped to achieve significant progress on behalf of equal opportunity

for African Americans". Lori first traveled to Kenya some years ago and started the [Smiles OverSeas](#), or SOS, Club at Gardenhill that helps raise money to help the [ByGrace Children's Home](#) in Kenya's Rift Valley. Thank you, Lori, for your dedication to education in both Africa and North America and for your example in the importance of being strong together.

As we aim to serve students of all backgrounds with excellence, we wanted to bring to your attention the results of a US Department of Education study that discusses the importance of recognizing the diverse backgrounds of all students and how [colorblindness increasingly harms our diverse public schools and nation](#). In light of our 2014 conference theme of *strength together*, may this be a challenge for all of us to consider what our schools and nation would look like where we recognize all of our students, and neighbors, as unique image bearers of God.

In closing, do take note of Biola University's other journals, [Christian Education Journal](#), [Great Commission Research Journal](#), [Journal of Psychology and Theology](#), and [Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care](#). We hope that all of Biola's journals will be a great blessing to you and your community as you seek to embody and carry out the gospel message to the nations.

With appreciation,

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JUSTICE, THE GOSPEL, AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BY DAVID W. ANDERSON

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this essay is on biblical justice in relation to persons with disabilities. The World Health Organization (2012) estimates that 15% of the world's population includes people with disabilities. This staggering percentage means that there are over 47 million Americans with disabilities today and over one billion worldwide. As an outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, the situation for some people with disabilities in the United States has continued to improve since the 1970s. However, in much of the world, individuals and families affected by disability continue to face injustice in the form of segregation, overt discrimination, exploitation, lack of education, and limited access to services, the combined result of which is "forced" poverty (Anderson, 2004).

My career in special education began at a time when significant changes were on the horizon in the United States as a result of Supreme Court decisions, case law, and federal mandates related to educational provisions for students with disabilities. These rulings were based on equal rights arguments drawn from the guarantee of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution that a person cannot be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor denied equal protection of the law. Part of my responsibility was to help school administrators and both general and special education teachers understand how these rulings altered the school's approach to students with special needs by both limiting and directing educational procedures.

Starting in the late 1990s, I began to teach and consult on issues of disability in Africa, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere. Learning how people with disabilities are viewed and treated in other parts of the world helped me to see the problem as not simply a "rights" issue, but a matter of justice. In much of the world, individuals and families affected by disability continue to face injustice in the form of inequality (such as lack of access to health care, education, and employment), violations of dignity (such as violence, abuse, or exploitation), and denial of autonomy, including being unable or unwelcome to participate in the community. People with disabilities are often among the most alienated and marginalized, viewed as second-class citizens or even non-humans.

Many in the non-Western world view disability through the lens of cultural and religious tradition. Sometimes, faulty theology is involved, such as an inability to reconcile suffering with biblical teaching about the sovereignty of God, wrongly connecting disability with sin and punishment, and confusing physical cure with spiritual health and God's blessing. To some extent, these issues are present in much of the Western world. These barriers, coupled with limited or incorrect understanding of disability, lead to unjust treatment of individuals and families affected by disability. It also does injustice to God whose love and grace are not limited by a person's disability, but are offered freely to all.

FEEDING THE INJUSTICE

Physical barriers can limit access and opportunities but attitudinal and theological barriers are more significant hindrances to the development and freedom of individuals with physical or intellectual impairments. These injustices can be related to the language of "lumping," the language of tragedy, the language of normalization and equality, and the tyranny of normalcy.

The Language of "Lumping" — Categorization

Not recognizing or respecting the individual person is injustice. People with physical or mental impairments are often lumped into a collective category: "the disabled." Characteristics observed in one person may be generalized to others, even though their impairment differs. People speak in a raised voice so that someone who is blind can hear what is being said. Wheelchair users are not addressed directly, but spoken to "through" an able-bodied relative or attendant. According to some able-bodied people, "well-adjusted" persons with disabilities are those who display courage in the face of their trials, cheerfulness despite their circumstances, and gratefulness for the help they receive. On the other hand, acting "out of character" by appearing demanding or assertive may lead to their being criticized or rejected (Barnes & Mercer, 2003). This parallels the way ethnic minorities were viewed prior to the Civil Rights era.

People with disabilities are sometimes regarded as perpetual children or victims of fate and assumed unable to contribute to their own or their family's well-being. They may be thought evil, accursed, or punished by God because of personal, parental, or ancestral sin. In some cultures, a father may assume an infant born with an obvious disability is a mistake and return the infant to the "gods" by abandoning the child beside a river or in a wooded area, or by burying the infant alive. In Western nations, doctors may encourage aborting a fetus thought to carry a defective gene or to show signs of a disability. They might suggest withholding nourishment from an infant with significant mental impairment or argue that the quality of life for the child will be limited. Actually, it may be the parents' desired quality of life that may be impacted by raising a child with a severe or profound disability. The right of the parents not to be burdened by such a child is thought to outweigh any rights of the fetus, who is not regarded a human being before birth. Sadly, a cognitively impaired infant may be described as "sub-human" because of an assumed inability to reason, and thought undeserving of the gift of life.

The Language of Tragedy

The presence of people with disabilities often threatens the security of the able-bodied because it reminds them of their own vulnerability to accident, illness, or violence, and of their mortality—even aging increases the risk of becoming disabled. This "fear" of disability contributes to viewing disability as tragic, promoting an attitude of charity or pity, an attitude which often masks feelings of superiority and the assumption that persons who are disabled have little to offer, other than making those who provide assistance feel good about themselves. Certainly, some degree of limitation is usually present, but people who are disabled do not always see themselves as victims or their disability as a tragedy. We who are able-bodied are sometimes amazed at what a person is able to do despite having a disability. However, for that person, what he or she does is "normal."

The language of loss and tragedy needs to be replaced with more constructive, liberating language that enables people with disabilities to be proud of their lives and contributions to humanity (Fritzen, 2004). This requires both an altered understanding and expectation of those who are disabled, and the availability of appropriate environmental and programmatic supports and services. To some extent, a sociological, rather than a medical, analysis attempts to address this issue by suggesting that "disability" is often the result of society's lack of provision or accommodation for people with non-conventional bodies or minds. Disability becomes a social-cultural category that is understood on a continuum—a matter of more or less rather than yes or no. Conceptually, it does not refer to the individual's physical or mental condition alone but includes the contribution of the environmental and cultural milieu (World Health Organization, 2011). While not denying that a physical or cognitive impairment results in some functional limitations, disability is attributed more to an environment that favors able-bodied persons. The environment (including services that are or are not available to the person) creates disability, not the actual impairment (Peter, 2011).

The Language of Normalization and Equality

The principle of normalization holds that people with disabilities should experience life in conditions as close as possible to the cultural norm. This principle was influential in dismantling large residential institutions and in providing education in the least restrictive setting during the 1970s and 1980s. The thought beneath normalization is equality and sameness. Arguments for inclusion are often couched in the language of equality, leading to the assumption that to be treated equally is to be treated justly. However, the language of equality can merely reduce people to a common denominator, which can be both disrespectful and repressive: "No one wants to pay the price of being treated equally if that means they must reject who they are" (Hauerwas, 2004, p. 39, *sic*). While this recognizes that all people, regardless of ability or disability, are human beings and have the same entitlements, such as access to education and the community, there may be an insistence that students with disabilities conform to a specific mode of behavior so they can "fit" into the general education classroom or community. The result may be denial of individuality in an attempt to force the person to be like the non-disabled majority (Fritzen, 2004).

The Tyranny of Normalcy

Disability presents a challenge to what is perceived as "normal," but the concept of normalcy has been overplayed. People tend to equate normal with natural and abnormal with unnatural. This significantly influences their thinking when they encounter someone who is "different." However, normal simply means "average" or "expected," making people who are not of average height, weight, age, or intelligence "not normal." Both the Bible and the created world itself suggest that uniformity was not God's intent. Rather, the created world is a display of God's imagination and artistry. Diversity is normal; each person is "a unique bearer and reflector of the glory of God" (Plantinga, 2002, p. 40).

The problem is not with those who have a disability, but with the idea of normalcy, an unhealthy notion that contributes to discrimination towards people with disabilities and the rejection of people's God-given uniqueness (Wink, 1995). Since people are each distinctly and differently created by God, the concept of normal is meaningless. Speaking of people as "normal" or as "abnormal" is inconsistent with Christian teaching and disregards the essential uniqueness of every individual (Harrison, 1995). People do not deviate from normal; difference is normal. The pressure to be "normalized" may come at the expense of the needs and desires of the individual who has a disability (Swain, French, & Cameron, 2003). Since there is no "normal" way for humans to be, Fritzen (2004) suggested that disability, being common to human experience, may actually add something to a person's life and provide for a more diverse and richer world.

Does Inclusion Promote Justice?

The rights of people with disabilities are officially acknowledged in the U.S. and supported by laws such as *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEIA) and *The Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA). However, programs and expectations for people with disabilities may still reflect an element of injustice. The cost of emphasizing individual rights is often a reduction of personal care and social relationships (Pohl, 1999), such as characterizes many classrooms where inclusion, though acknowledged as a "right" to which students are entitled, is viewed with skepticism or resistance. Overemphasizing the rights of students with disabilities may reinforce separation by highlighting differences. Terms like "exceptional" and "special" can set students apart by suggesting weakness or inability rather than acknowledging that individuals with non-conventional bodies or minds are worthy of the same honor, dignity, and respect accorded able-bodied students. It has even been suggested that special education as presently conceived fosters a culture of dependency (Swain et al., 2003), particularly for students with severe or multiple impairments. Inclusive practices may deny a student's individuality by disregarding needs or abilities that traditional assessment and instruction may overlook. Injustice may also be at play. People with power (teachers, psychologists, administrators) may disregard the wishes or preferences of the student and the parents when they choose special education programming and placement. Furthermore, there is an implicit assumption that people with a disability need or want to be normal.

Biblical Justice

Changes in American social and educational policy have influenced practice, but have not necessarily led to inclusive attitudes on the part of teachers, administrators, or non-disabled peers. Merely creating space in the classroom does not necessarily open people to being inclusive. Students with disabling conditions may be physically present in the classroom but remain isolated, even though surrounded by others. Legal mandates for inclusion argued that the basis of equal rights alone cannot guarantee the kind of human connection and rootedness that provide a safe and meaning-filled place (Pohl, 1999). Understanding inclusion from the perspective of biblical justice and reconciliation, not simply as a legal or philosophical matter, can both open doors and space in the classroom and open hearts to include all persons, resulting in appropriate recognition and celebration of differences (Anderson, 2010, 2012). Such inclusiveness is an issue of justice fundamental to the Gospel (Senior, 1995).

People tend to think of justice propositionally, as a "thing" to which they are entitled. People are often heard to say "I demand justice!" or "We need to get justice for this person"—ideas which generally link justice with punishment or revenge. The focus may actually be on securing justice for oneself, even at the expense of others. Viewed this way, justice is understood as a noun, some "thing" that resides outside of oneself. Human rights then become something people can grant or withhold based on their perception of others and what they do or can do. This can lead to viewing an unborn child, a severely disabled individual, or someone in a persistent vegetative state as less than human, making human rights no longer an issue and "justifying" euthanasia. From a biblical perspective, however, the presence of disability or a comatose state does not bring into question the humanity of an individual or the person's creation in the image of God. Even the unborn child is fully human.

Contemporary usage of the word *justice* limits people's understanding of its biblical meaning and masks its use in the Bible as a synonym for *righteousness* (Roberts, 2002). The standard which defines just behavior is a moral and ethical one derived from God's character, expressed in the commands of the law, and revealed by the prophets as God's expectation that His people relate lovingly to others (Richards, 1991; Sanders, 1997). Rather than a thing external to our being, biblical justice is better understood as a verb—an action to be practiced. It is something people do, not simply a philosophical or legal term. Biblical justice is an interpersonal concept. Rather than focusing on how we are treated by others, it has to do with how we treat one another (Richards, 1991) calls Christians to love and concern for others, regardless of who they are or what they can or cannot do.

The connection between justice and loving kindness is clear from Micah 6:8, which reveals God's instruction to "do justice" and "love kindness." The verse also warns against a hierarchical, judgmental view of others by calling for humility before God. Not limited to granting others their rights, justice includes establishing and promoting the rights of others, particularly the vulnerable, who may be oppressed by those who hold power in society. This draws attention to the barrier often erected by able-bodied people to separate themselves (physically, emotionally, or spiritually) from persons who have a disability—a barrier that necessitates reconciliation so that justice can prevail (Anderson, 2003). To establish and to live out ("do") justice requires removing anything that hinders healthy relationships between people so that peace and harmony are established (Zorrilla, 1988).

Micah 6:8, along with its parallel in Hosea 12:6 ("hold fast to love and justice, and wait continually for your God"), suggest that justice is a lifestyle evidenced by interacting with others in a manner that establishes and maintains a just relationship. The focus is not on self, other than to require "walking humbly" and "waiting" upon God, by which Christians put into practice justice and loving kindness to others (Prior, 1998). Just as God's justice (righteousness) is grounded in his nature, that same justice (right behavior) is to be exhibited by Christians as Christ's representatives. This is especially true when they speak for those who have little or no voice. Biblical justice is not a private, abstract issue. It differs from justice in the social or legal realm. In doing justice, Christians participate in the compassionate acts of God (Zorrilla, 1988). People give justice a human form both by responding to those in need and by addressing those who keep people in need.

Biblical Justice And Fairness

Justice is sometimes used as a synonym for fairness, but often God's justice does not equal what is fair but what is right (Ryken, Wilhoit, & Longman, 1998, p. 474). For some, justice means equal treatment. This is typically the view held by teachers and seems to be what federal education law emphasizes. However, equal treatment means the same. Though seemingly pragmatic, this denies individuality, disregarding diversity in order to promote uniformity. For others, justice means everyone receives what he or she has earned. This assumes that some people are inferior because they lack characteristics or abilities needed to earn rewards. It reflects a Darwinistic, survival-of-the-fittest idea (Smart, 2001, p. 129).

A higher view understands justice to mean everyone receives what he or she needs. This involves a shift from an abstract, principle-based ethic, to a value-based ethic of care, in which individual and community relationships are important (Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2002). Beneficence assumes a greater role as individual differences, and the needs of others are duly considered. In this view, justice remains linked with equal outcomes but acknowledges that different people have different needs and require different services or supports to achieve similar ends. Everyone gains the same rewards of society, at the same basic standards, but with differing accommodations (Smart, 2001). This perspective corresponds with the Bible's declaration of God's impartiality (Deuteronomy 19:17, Job 34:19, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11)—meaning not that all people are treated alike, but that with God there is no favoritism: all receive what is needed.

CONCLUSION

Principles of biblical justice provide a more solid basis for inclusive education, inclusive communities, and inclusive churches. Inclusive practices based on principles of biblical justice will help educators (especially Christians) recognize that each student should receive what is needed, appropriately considering each one's strengths and weaknesses while avoiding the negativity that can result from focusing on limitations or differences. Biblical justice establishes a situation in which shalom and community are possible. This justice recognizes that all people have strengths and weaknesses and asserts their interdependence with one another (Anderson, 2006).

Just as Jesus broke through barriers of gender, religion, ethnicity, and disability, Christians today must challenge practices and ideologies that lead to the exclusion of others. The principle of doing what is right and demonstrating loving kindness to others, and of living humbly, in obedience to God, is a blueprint for creating classrooms and communities that are truly inclusive, truly just, classrooms or communities in which educators can enact grace on behalf of others, rather than merely preach the existence of grace (Edmonds, 2011). To be grounded in Jesus, Christians must follow His model of breaking down barriers that separate able-bodied individuals from those with disabilities. Christians must "Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed . . . speak for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice" (Proverbs 31:8–9, NLT).

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HELPING THE POOR AND NEEDY THROUGH EDUCATION: EXAMINING THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN POVERTY EDUCATION RESEARCH AND ORPHAN EDUCATION

BY CALVIN ROSO

ABSTRACT

God's care and compassion for the less fortunate is mentioned throughout the Bible. This emphasis reminds the Christian educator that the act of helping the helpless is not a suggestion, but one's Christian duty. James 1:27 says, "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you" (NLT). Jeremiah 22:16 reminds us that to "know God" means helping the widow and the orphan. Likewise, Hosea 12:6 tells us to return to God, "Hold fast to love and mercy, to righteousness and justice, and wait [expectantly] for . . . God continually" (AMP). These verses suggest that when we help the helpless, we know the heart of God and become His hands in the process. This paper addresses the needs of orphans throughout the world by attempting to link research by Ruby Payne and others on educating students living in poverty in the United States with research on orphan education in other nations. The objective is to discover educational methods and a biblical perspective for assisting orphan schools around the world. By doing so, Christian educators can assist the poor and needy through the application of biblical principles to the profession of education.

INTRODUCTION

God's care and compassion for the less fortunate is mentioned throughout the Bible. This emphasis reminds the Christian educator that the act of helping the helpless is not a suggestion, but one's Christian duty. James 1:27 says, "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you" (NLT). Jeremiah 22:16 reminds us that to "know God" means helping the widow and the orphan. Likewise, Hosea 12:6 tells us to return to God, "Hold fast to love and mercy, to righteousness and justice, and wait [expectantly] for . . . God continually" (AMP). These verses suggest that when we help the helpless, we know the heart of God and become His hands in the process.

Ever since my first trip to an orphanage in Colombia in 2000, I have asked myself the question, "How can I, as an educator, help the poor and the needy through my profession?" This paper addresses the needs of orphans throughout the world by attempting to link research by Ruby Payne and others on educating students living in poverty in the United States with research on orphan education in other nations. The objective is to discover educational methods and a biblical perspective for assisting orphan schools around the world. By doing so, Christian educators can assist the poor and needy through the application of biblical principles to the profession of education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are an ongoing international concern due, in part, to the impact of HIV/AIDS and economic and social factors in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond (Deters & Bajaj, 2008; Emond, 2009; UNICEF, 2012). It is estimated that over 132 million children are orphans worldwide (as cited in SOS, n.d.). It is also estimated that each day 5,760 more children become orphans around the world (SOS). The number of orphaned children in sub-Saharan Africa alone equals more than the combined number of children in Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Norway and Sweden (SOS). The tragedy of orphans and vulnerable children can be seen in the description of street girls who:

Toil in the markets selling food or ice water . . . carrying heavy loads on their heads that seem to defy the frailty of their neck. With the number of street children increasing every day, even these jobs are becoming increasingly scarce and as an unfortunate consequence, prostitution is becoming a main source of income for some street girls. At night, they mostly sleep in the open air, rain or shine, on small mats or cardboard. These children usually sleep in groups to protect and support each other (as cited in Deters & Bajaj, 2008, p. 29).

While none would dispute the need to help OVC, and in spite of the vast number of orphans and vulnerable children worldwide, there are few studies that describe the context and conditions in which OVC learn in the orphanage setting (Levin & Haines, 2007).

An *orphan* is defined as a child under 18 who is lacking one or both parents (SOS, n.d.). Orphans who live in an orphanage and have a parent still living, may or may not have some contact with that living parent. OVC are children who “in a given local setting, are the most likely to fall through the cracks of regular programs, policies, and traditional safety nets” (Kielland, 2004). In developing nations, orphans, and street children are seen as the most vulnerable of children due to neglect, abandonment, abuse, and/or separation (Deters & Baja, 2008). Although the precise number of orphanages worldwide is undocumented, orphanages and orphan education are seen as a path to enable children to end generational poverty and move from vulnerability into security and meaningful, productive lives (UNICEF, 2011). If education is seen as a necessary path to help orphans and vulnerable children succeed, what should a quality education for OVC look like?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to review the literature of poverty education in the United States and compare that literature with research on orphanage education to discover what practices might be transferable to educating orphans.

Educators have been grappling for decades with how to include marginalized children into mainstream schooling; we, therefore, should be able to respond knowledgeably to the orphan crisis with appropriate tools developed by tackling similar issues. (Boler & Carrol, 2003, p. 4)

Although the research literature on specific methods for the schooling of orphans is limited (Levin & Haines, 2007), applicable insights into education can still be gained through the study of this literature. Through analyzing the literature and applying biblical principles to orphan education, this study proposed ideas for best practices in orphan education worldwide.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The guiding question for this study was, “What does a quality education for OVC look like?” Supporting questions were:

1. What do current theories and research on poverty education in the United States contribute to OVC education internationally?
2. How do the theories and research on orphan education compare or contrast with similar literature on poverty education in the United States?
3. What insights does a biblical perspective give to educating OVC?
4. What curriculum unique to OVC should be taught in orphanages outside the United States?
5. What instructional methods should be used to teach OVC in these orphanages?

POVERTY EDUCATION THEORIES AND RESEARCH

Ruby Payne

Ruby Payne (2005) is seen as one of the leading experts on poverty and education in the United States, with her professional development having been adopted in 38 states as of 2008 (Boomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008). The focus of her literature and professional development enables teachers and schools to understand children of poverty, while also equipping teachers with ideas to help these children succeed. Payne defines *poverty* as “the extent to which an individual does without resources” (2005, p. 7) and suggests that *resources* include financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models, and knowledge of hidden rules.

Payne (2005) bases much of her research on a concept of “culture of poverty” (as cited in Payne, p. 140). The term *culture of poverty* was first coined by Oscar Lewis (1971; 1961; 1959) who claimed there are universal characteristics of poverty that can be identified throughout the world. Lewis (1971) suggests people of poverty share similarities in “family structure, interpersonal relations, time orientations, value systems, spending patterns, and the sense of community” (p. 137). “Poverty occurs in all races and in all countries” (Payne, 2005, p. 2), and the universal characteristics of people in poverty are found in “hidden rules” relating to possessions, money, personality, social emphasis, food, clothing, time, education, destiny, language, family structure, worldview, love, driving forces, and humor (p. 42). Payne says that those who grow up in a culture of poverty view each of these rules differently than someone from the middle or wealthy classes. According to Payne, a person of poverty views his or her destiny

fatalistically and views time in the present (i.e., lives for today). In contrast, someone from the middle class views destiny as within his or her control based on personal choices; likewise, time for the middle class focuses on planning for the future. In an educational setting, Payne believes children of poverty must learn the hidden rules of the middle class and teachers must help these children learn to live by these rules within the school. She says, “[A teacher’s] understanding of the culture and values of poverty will lessen the anger and frustration that educators may periodically feel when dealing with these students and parents” (2005, p. 45).

Multiple suggestions are given by Payne (2008; 2005) to help children of poverty succeed in school and in later life. Individuals leave poverty, according to Payne, because of a key relationship, a special skill or talent, a goal or vision, or because it is too painful to remain in poverty. Foremost among the suggestions for success is the importance of relationships with teachers and mentors. Teachers and educational administrators should build relationships through being positive role models and mentoring that serves as a catalyst to help students move out of poverty. Payne also recommends assessing students’ strengths and weaknesses, monitoring progress and planning interventions, translating the concrete into the abstract, training students to ask questions, and building relationships with parents as methods to help disadvantaged children succeed (2008). In addition, professional development should focus on a diagnostic approach to helping students: “insistence, expectations, and support need to be guiding lights in our decisions about instruction” (Payne, 2005, p. 108).

Arguments against Payne

In the past few years, some critics have spoken out against Ruby Payne’s studies. Gorski (2008) and others (Boomer, Dworin, May & Semingson, 2008) argue against the idea that a culture common to people of poverty exists. “The idea that poor people share more or less monolithic and predictable beliefs, values, and behaviors” is a myth, according to Gorski (2008, p. 1). Likewise, Boomer, Dworin, May & Semingson (2008) disagree with Payne’s (2005) generalization of poverty, arguing that her theories are not backed by accurate research, and (they argue) Payne puts the onus on the victim and not on the schools. Gorski (2008) says to help poor students learn, schools must address inequities among students and provide the best possible education for all through teaching higher-order thinking skills, using innovation in classroom instruction, and emphasizing holistic teaching and learning. More specifically, he suggests making curriculum pertinent to poor students to validate their intelligences and experiences.

Eric Jensen

Eric Jensen (2009) approaches educating the poor from a brain-research perspective discussing the ill effects of poverty on children’s cognitive ability to succeed. According to Jensen, poverty can be categorized into six types: situational, generational, absolute, relative, urban, and rural. His research emphasizes four principal risk factors challenging families living in poverty: “emotional and social challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues” (p. 7). Jensen suggests educators can help students from poverty-stricken families by (1) deepening staff understanding of the effects of poverty on students’ health, emotions, and cognition, and (2) moving from “pity to empathy” (p. 12).

The problem . . . is that [pity] leads to lowered expectations. . . . Establish a school culture of caring, not of giving up. You can help foster such a culture by speaking respectfully, not condescendingly, of and to your student population, and by using positive affirmations, both vocally and through displays and posters (Jensen, 2009, p. 12).

Jensen (2009) narrows common characteristics of high-poverty, high-achieving schools and high-poverty, high-achieving classrooms to a set of factors applicable to the school-level and classroom level: support of the whole child, hard data, accountability, relationship-building, and an enrichment mind-set (p. 69). According to Jensen, educators need to be reminded that “every emotional response other than the six hardwired emotions of joy, anger, surprise, disgust, sadness, and fear must be taught” (p. 19). Humility, forgiveness, empathy, optimism, compassion, sympathy, patience, shame, cooperation, and gratitude are learned responses about which teachers must educate students. In addition, teachers must learn “to provide emotional support while they engage students’ interest and build their intellectual skills” (p. 151).

Corbett and Fikkert

In their book, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself*, Corbett and Fikkert (2012) suggest people’s understanding of poverty is flawed because they typically think of poverty as financial. Based on previous research by Myers (1999), Corbett and Fikkert (2012) describe poverty as being deficient in one or more of the following categories: Poverty

of Being (self-esteem); Poverty of Community (relationships); Poverty of Stewardship (sense of purpose, view of work and/or materialism) and Poverty of Spiritual Intimacy (p. 58). Furthermore, poverty can be labeled as crisis (needing immediate and temporary assistance), short-term (needing rehabilitation to work with individuals to move out of poverty), and long-term (needing development with people to change the circumstances). One commonality they find in people of poverty is the inability to change one's situation. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen states, "It is the lack of freedom to be able to make meaningful choices—to have an ability to affect one's situation—that is the distinguishing feature of poverty" (as cited in Corbett & Fikkert, 2012, p. 67). "Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are unjust, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all of its meanings" (as cited in Corbett & Fikkert, 2012, p. 59).

Reconciliation of relationships is the guiding compass for our poverty-alleviation efforts, profoundly shaping both the goals we pursue and the methods we use. The goal is not to make the materially poor all over the world into middle-to-upper-class North Americans. . . . Rather, the goal is to restore people to a full expression of humanness, to being what God created us all to be, people who glorify God by living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012, p. 74).

Corbett & Fikkert (2012) state that a distorted worldview can also be a leading cause of material poverty:

- A distorted worldview concerning God can cause individuals or societies to hoard or waste materials.
- A distorted worldview concerning self can cause individuals or societies to believe they are unable to succeed and, therefore, to ultimately stop trying to succeed.
- A distorted worldview concerning others can cause some to prey on others who, then, see themselves as helpless and hopeless.
- A distorted worldview concerning the rest of creation views life fatalistically and may not believe in the idea of using the food resources the world has to offer to one's benefit. In addition, stewardship of the earth and one's resources might also be ignored.

Poverty can also be caused by broken systems when individuals, corporations, and/or governments make decisions that hurt individuals (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). Educational systems can, in part, help break the grip of poverty through vocational training and teaching people to adapt to the rapidly changing global environment. However, any attempt to alleviate poverty without counsel and collaboration from the local community would be counter-productive.

Additional Research

Additional literature states there are common characteristics found among the poor and less fortunate. Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) suggests the urban poor have similar attitudes regarding the following: finances, spirituality, sex, support/assistance, desires, self-expression, love, children, dreams, and fear. He also argues that a culture of "scarcity" exists among the impoverished which is based on a worldview that influences current and future actions (p. 20). Likewise, Vaisey (2009) suggests worldview influences the actions, aspirations and expectations of poor youth. While both Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) and Vaisey (2009) veer away from the term "culture of poverty," each author suggests there are common cultural values which do enable individuals to succeed in life. Harrison (2000) says in order to move out of poverty, the focus of education should be on development instead of culture. His research and the research of Grondona (2000) show progressive cultures hold a different view than impoverished cultures on the following: time, work, frugality, education, advancement, community, ethics, justice, authority, and secularism.

Summary of Poverty Education Approaches

Although the literature reveals differences in the definition of poverty and whether or not a "culture of poverty" exists, the majority of authors agree that poverty goes beyond financial limitations. Payne (2005), Jensen (2009), and Corbett and Fikkert (2012) all agree that poverty can include a deficiency in financial, emotional, and relational resources. Payne, Corbett, and Fikkert state that poverty might also include spiritual limitations. Each of the authors reviewed agree that poverty is caused by both internal forces (things one can control) and external forces (outside of one's control). Payne, Jensen, Corbett, and Fikkert each advocate that individuals in poverty must become equipped to move themselves out of their situations and educators can help students through that process. Part of this equipping, according to some (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Harrison, 2000; Grondona, 2000; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Vaisey, 2009), includes teaching the standards and values to succeed in school and in life beyond the classroom.

THEORIES AND RESEARCH SPECIFIC TO ORPHAN AND ORPHANAGE EDUCATION

Current research on orphans and orphanages emphasizes the importance of education as a means to improve one's life (Deters & Bajaj, 2008; Emond, 2009; Gumede, 2009; Takayanagi, 2010; UNICEF, 2012/2009). Schools and teachers are highly important in filling the gap left by the loss of one or more parents (Ogina, 2010). According to UNICEF (2009), "Education is critical to the future of all children, but especially to those who are orphaned or vulnerable" (p. vi). A child in Zambia said, "If you are uneducated, you will suffer. I want to get an education and I want to get a good job and help my family" (as cited in Takayanagi, 2010, p. 8). Several themes emerged in research specific to orphan education and education at orphanages: community involvement, meeting children's basic needs, the role of the teacher, educational curriculum, and the instructional environment.

Community Involvement

Children living in an orphanage often struggle with their sense of self and identity (Emond, 2009), feeling alone in society and lacking hope for their future. A community approach, community help, and community organizations were found to be helpful to connect students to their current world and also gave children a vision for life after the orphanage (Deters & Bajaj, 2008; Emond, 2009; Takayanagi, 2010). Many studies conclude that the most effective approach to educating orphans would be to have the children live in homes with families instead of orphanages and/or other government institutions. However, due to the increasing number of orphans worldwide, not enough families are available for many OVC. Because of this, local communities must help children successfully integrate into society when they become adults (Deters & Bajaj, 2008; Prisiazhnaia, 2008; Takayanagi, 2010). Additional community initiatives include: local leadership, volunteerism, consensus-based decision making, innovation, reciprocity, and collaboration with faith-based organizations (Deters & Baja, 2008).

Orphanages need to collaborate with children, parents, and teachers to find the most effective content and practices to meet OVC's educational needs (Cook, 2009). For example, the Pikler Institute is a residential nursery in Budapest that has been using a community approach to raising children for over 60 years (Gonzalez-Mena, 2004). The institute uses a collectivist setting where children live in groups, and teaches children to keep their individual goals while also coordinating those goals with group goals. In addition to this unique approach to group living and goal-setting, the institute creates a sense of security in children by focusing on continuity, consistency, and predictability in routines. Each of these community-focused methods has enabled the Pikler Institute to effectively prepare students for transitions into families without the emotional disturbances or cognitive impairments that are common among young orphans.

Meeting Basic Needs First

Orphaned children go to school while also dealing with psycho-social issues, traumas, stigmas, and expectations which all impact their success in school (Aicha Briggs, 2012; Boler, 2003; Deters & Bajaj, 2009). These children are at great risk of delayed development in communication (Kaler & Freeman, 1994) and in "associated behavioral, social, psychiatric, cognitive, and academic difficulties in the long term" (Levin & Haines, 2007, p. 222). Because orphans and vulnerable children have more diverse needs that are directly related to their upbringing, orphanages have to deal with a wider spectrum of tasks that Shakhmanova (2010) divides into three inter-related blocks: compensating, developmental, and correctional. Within each child is a core need to love and be loved, and White and Wright (2003) suggest children have five basic needs that also need to be met: security, significance, boundaries, community, and creativity. One study of village orphans in South Africa researched the importance of understanding the psycho-social (physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual) well-being of orphans in the context of schooling (Gumede, 2009). The results of this study stressed the necessity of meeting Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs within the child before addressing the child's academic needs. This study is confirmed by research in Ghana that stresses the importance of helping children "understand and express feeling appropriately, develop a sense of self, develop social skills and positive peer and adult relationships and develop a positive and open approach to learning" (Deters & Bajaj, 2009, p. 43). Many agree that special training is necessary to equip educators on how to meet the basic needs and classroom management of orphans and street children (Freidus, 2011; Ogina, 2010; UNICEF, 2009).

Role of the Teacher

Research also advocates the importance of teachers as emotional and personal support to orphans and vulnerable children. A study of orphans in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa (Aicha Briggs, 2012) showed that caring and schooling are intricately linked to one another and schools should provide an emotional support for OVC. The teacher "very often serves as the only carrier of the norms and values of the surrounding world in the children's eyes" (Shakhmanova, 2010, p. 76). The teacher of OVC is not only a mentor but also serves a pastoral role (Ogina, 2010) which includes counseling and psychological support of children (Aicha Briggs, 2012; Boler & Carroll, 2003; Deters & Baja, 2008; Gumede, 2009; UNICEF, 2009). "Teachers who empathize with the orphaned learners tend to assume the [pastoral] care-giving role and respond by providing material and sometimes emotional support . . . based on their background experience and religious belief" (Ogina, 2010, p. 7). This role includes teaching a sense of self and how to relate to society beyond the individual student's own experiences (Freidus, 2011). The personal interaction between the teacher and child satisfies children's "need to think of themselves as a unique personality and to get individual attention from an adult" (Astoians, 2007).

Educational Curriculum

Curriculum for OVC focuses on helping students with basic needs while also equipping them emotionally, academically, and socially to survive beyond an institutionalized life (Deters & Bajaj, 2009; Gumede, 2009). Educational curriculum must address the unique needs of these children. For example, "A curriculum on self-image does not formally address disease, disparity and death; instead it informally addresses these issues by providing emotional health so that children are better able to respond when dealing with sickness and death" (Deters & Bajaj, 2009, p. 45).

Studies reveal that orphaned children struggle with knowing how to appropriately socialize with peers and/or adults (Kaler & Freeman, 1994; Prisiazhnaia, 2008; Shakhmanova, 2010). Social learning is also highly important to OVC development (Taneja, Sriram, Beri, Sreenivas, Aggarwal, Kaur, & Puliyel, 2001). Therefore, curriculum programs must be tailored to students' needs. This includes ideas like creating accelerated learning programs for those who have had education disrupted (UNICEF, 2012).

Orphan school curriculum should embrace concepts and tasks that prepare students for life after the orphanage (UNICEF, 2009).

In a situation where a child has lived in an orphanage from birth, his socialization is stunted The adolescent is not able to form an appropriate set of ideas about the life of society and the rules that govern functioning in society and this becomes a source of problems in life. (Prisiazhnaia, 2008, p. 26)

Ideal curriculum also addresses the teaching of self and life outside the orphanage (Freidus, 2011) through lessons and work or apprenticeship activities (Emond, 2009). "Dependency on the institution for support may extend long into adulthood, which many institutions may not be prepared to provide" (Freidus, 2011, p. 140). Lessons and activities to help students understand their individual personalities, cognitive interests, and individual abilities are also important in preparing them for work after school (Pantiukhina, 2009). Furthermore, research advocates that OVC should be taught values, convictions, attitudes, morals, and norms to help students cope effectively (Pantiukhina, 2009).

Flexibility in Instruction and Classroom Environment

Instructional methodology and classroom environment for effectively teaching OVC must be child-centered (Astoians, 2007; Boler & Carroll, 2003; Cook, 2009; Pantiukhina, 2009; UNICEF, 2009) and flexible (UNICEF, 2009). Research at an orphanage in Belize showed "new and different ideas for learning can allow young children opportunity for healthy learning" (Cook, 2009, p. 13). Team teaching and integrated subject courses are quite helpful in engaging OVC (Prisiazhnaia, 2008). Instruction can also contain illustrations, exercises, role play, group discussion, storytelling, drama, etc. (UNICEF, 2009). Art therapy has also been helpful for students to learn to communicate and reflect about their lives before, during and after the orphanage (Ivanova, 2004). "Often the issue is not that these children have educational difficulties, but that they understand the material in a different way" (as cited in Ivanova, 2004, p. 14), which supports the necessity of using a variety of methods to engage students. These differentiated methods include activity-orientated learning (Pantiukhina, 2009), open learning, and distance learning (Boler & Carroll, 2003). Likewise, daily sessions of play are important to help children become more active, responsive and independent (Taneja, et al., 2001). "Through creating spaces of trust and safety to allow and encourage the sharing of what children think and feel, to develop consciousness on inequities

and exercise their moral imagination” (Rivage-Seul, 1987, in Deters & Bajaj, 2008), OVC will improve in their long-term growth and development.

COMPARING THE LITERATURE

Literature on poverty education in the United States and educating orphans and vulnerable children throughout the world has differences and commonalities. Despite the argument over whether or not a culture of poverty exists, several authors agree that in order to help children of poverty and OVC succeed, their past history and/or tragedies need to be addressed. It is necessary for the teacher to understand the culture and values of the child. Building relationship, role-modeling, and mentoring are vital for the teacher to help the child. Jensen (2009) suggests educators can help students from poverty-stricken families by (1) deepening staff understanding of the effects of poverty on students’ health, emotions, and cognition, and (2) moving from “pity to empathy” (p. 12). Teachers must learn “to provide emotional support while they engage students’ interest and build their intellectual skills” (Jensen, 2009, p. 12).

Assessing students’ strengths and weaknesses, monitoring progress and planning interventions, translating the concrete into the abstract, training students to ask questions, and building relationships with parents are all important in the role of the school, be it in the United States working with children of poverty, or in a developing nation at a school for orphans. Teaching higher-order thinking skills, using innovation in classroom instruction, and emphasizing holistic teaching and learning are seen as important in the literature.

Authors Corbett and Fikkert (2012) suggest that a distorted worldview is also a leading cause of material poverty. From their point of view, vocational training, teaching people to adapt to the rapidly changing global environment, and collaboration with a local community are highly important in educating the poor. The research of Prisiazhnaia (2008) and Freidus (2011) advocates the same necessity for preparing orphans to succeed in life beyond the orphanage.

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Bible contains principles for education that relate to teaching orphans and vulnerable children. An examination of these principles offers Christians insight into assisting the poor and needy through the application of faith to the profession of education. Understanding these principles is important as Christian educators attempt to fulfill the Bible’s mandate to bring help and justice to OVC (Isaiah 56:1; Hosea 12:6; 1 John 3:16-18).

Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Scripture

There is an ongoing biblical call to bring justice to those who are suffering and helpless (Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Jeremiah 22:3, 16; 1 Peter 3:8-9). Biblical justice often aims at meeting the physical needs of orphans and widows (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 27:19; Psalm 82:3; Isaiah 1:17; James 1:27). The cry of orphans and widows does not go unnoticed by God, who is “deeply in love with the poor and the outcast” (Davis, 2008, p. 30). God’s heart for the orphan is exemplified in Scripture, where the *fatherless* and *orphan* are mentioned over 40 times, the *poor* are mentioned nearly 150 times, and *children* are mentioned nearly 500 times. Psalm 10:14 and Psalm 68:5 define God as the helper and father of the fatherless. Deuteronomy 10:18 says, “[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow” (NIV). In turn, Deuteronomy 15:11 commands that we should be “open-handed” to the poor and needy among us (NIV). Proverbs 19:17 says that whoever is kind to the poor “lends to the Lord” (NIV). Likewise, Jesus said, “Whatever you did for the least of these . . . you did for me” (Matthew 25:40, NIV). Mother Teresa applied this mandate to “the dying, the crippled, the mentally ill, the unwanted, the unloved—they are Jesus in disguise. . . . [Through the] poor people I have an opportunity to be 24 hours a day with Jesus” (as cited in Davis, p. 152).

Biblical Principles for Education

The “aim of Christian education is to see God revealed” and equip students to reveal God to others (Byrne, 1977, p. 191). The Bible says children should be taught several things: God’s laws (Deuteronomy 6:6, 11:17; Psalm 78:1-5); the fear of the Lord (Psalm

111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 2:6, 3:13, 4:5); and the teachings of Jesus Christ and righteousness (Ephesians 4:20-24; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 5:13-14; 2 John 1:9). The purpose of education, from a biblical perspective, is for students to understand and accept the truth and the fear of the Lord so they can grow and mature in wisdom (Gaebelin, 1968). Like Christ, students should be trained to grow spiritually, physically, emotional, and socially (Luke 2:52). Christian education “means the kind of instruction and training which leads one to a knowledge of the Scriptures and of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to living a holy life” (Byrne, 1977, p. 33). Finally, Christian education equips the student to love God and others in his or her life and profession (Van Brummelen, 2002; Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2012).

The Bible outlines multiple concepts that children need to experience and learn (Wright, Budiardjo, & Yewangoe, 2003):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be delighted in • To be believed in • Love (Hosea 11:1-11) • Honest affirmations and encouragement, for who they are • To be made welcome (Matthew 18:5; 19:14) • Mutual responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical care • Guidance • To be enabled to grow in their faith • Discipline • To be believed in • To be taught • To be children (p. 27-31) |
|---|--|

Greener (2003) suggests children also “need role models and teaching to build multiple coping strategies, whether this means altering one's response to environmental circumstances, changing the environment or seeking help from others to deal with problems” (p. 46).

Biblical Instructional Methodologies

The Bible shows that God uses multiple methods to present Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. From the sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis to the closing chapter of The Book of Revelation, the Bible presents the reconciliation of mankind to God the Father through Jesus Christ. In addition, Scripture focuses on the revelation and explanation of truth. Jesus’ teachings said, “You have heard that it was said. . . . But I tell you . . .” (Matthew 5:21-44). Jesus presented himself as “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6, NIV).

While the content of the Bible focuses on the impartation of truth, God taught in a way that was always relevant to the individual, the setting, and the audience. For example, God taught Noah through a rainbow, Moses through a shepherd’s staff, David through music, and Nebuchadnezzar through deliverance from difficulty. Jesus taught the disciples and the multitudes by using stories of fishing, agriculture, and current events. The Apostle Paul taught the Corinthians through secular idols, poetry, and playwrights.

God’s methods of instruction in Scripture are not only student-centered, but they encourage active learning, and challenge the individual to identify and apply what is taught:

Much of Jesus’ teaching required people to physically *do* something. Changing water to wine required servants to physically draw water (John 2:1–12). The fishermen were required to cast out nets. Peter learned a lesson about taxes by catching a fish. The ten lepers walked and were healed. The woman with the issue of blood followed Jesus through the crowd. In addition, Jesus healed by making mud and requiring the blind man to wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9:6–7) (Roso, 2010, p. 42).

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING OVC

Having reviewed the research and discussed the topic from a biblical perspective, Christian educators can arrive at both curriculum content and instructional methods for teaching OVC. The literature suggests that a quality education for OVC is student-centered and prepares children for future life. Curriculum for OVC should meet children’s basic spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs as a prerequisite to academic study (Aicha Briggs, 2012; Deters & Bajaj, 2009; Jensen, 2009; Payne, 2005). Children should be reconciled to God and others as a foundation of education (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). To enable orphans to remain out of poverty, worldview education ought to include Grondona’s (2000) suggestions on progressive cultures regarding time, work, frugality, education, advancement, community, ethics, justice, authority, and secularism. Then, the curriculum should equip students with the

values to succeed academically, socially, and professionally (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). The survival skills advocated by Wright, Budiardjo, and Yewangoe (2003) should also be part of the curriculum to meet children's spiritual and social needs.

A child-centered, flexible instructional environment is important for teaching children of poverty and OVC (Astoians, 2007; Boler & Carroll, 2003; Cook, 2009; Jensen, 2009; Payne, 2005; Pantiukhina, 2009; UNICEF, 2009). Teachers of OVC need to view their position as mentor, model, pastor, and teacher (Aicha Briggs, 2012; Boler & Carrol, 2003; Ogina, 2010). Much of the methodology for teaching orphans and children of poverty focuses on hands-on learning that is both individual and collaborative in nature. Applicable methods from the literature and Scripture include:

- Training students to communicate effectively and ask questions (Payne, 2005).
- Teaching holistically (Gorski, 2008).
- Enriching curriculum and instruction by connecting to students' interests and experiences (Jensen, 2009).
- Training for vocation (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012).
- Training students to adapt to change (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012).
- Using collaborative learning within the classroom (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Deters & Baja, 2008; Gonzalez-Mena, 2004).
- Using collaborative learning outside the classroom to connect students to life beyond the orphanage (Deters & Baja, 2008; Freidus, 2011; Gonzalez-Mena, 2004).
- Using community volunteers for teaching and training (Deters & Baja, 2008; Emond, 2009).
- Collaborating with faith-based organizations (Deters & Baja, 2008).
- Training students in individual goal-setting (Payne, 2009; Gonzalez-Mena, 2004).
- Team teaching (Prisiazhnaia, 2008).
- Teaching creativity and self-reflection through exercise, role-play, stories, drama and art therapy (Ivanova, 2004).

Like the Bible's teaching, education for orphans and vulnerable children should be active, individualized, content-based, and able to equip students for today and the future.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to analyze poverty education research, orphan education research, and biblical principles to propose ideas for best practices in orphan education worldwide. Poverty education research applicable to orphans emphasizes the importance of mentoring relationships (Payne, 2008), student-centered curriculum (Gorski, 2008), teaching positive emotional responses (Jensen, 2009), and teaching worldview to enable students to move out of poverty (Corbett & Fickkert, 2012). As Christian educators, helping those who cannot help themselves is a biblical mandate. "God says He wants us to battle injustice, to look out for orphans and widows, to give sacrificially. . . . God wants us to get some skin in the game and help make a tangible difference" (Goff, 2012). In order to educate orphans effectively we need to first know the student by listening to him or her and understanding the community he or she is from.

A focus on children and their community helps educators understand what needs to be taught and how to teach in ways that are culturally relevant. As Christian educators, it is also necessary to use research to equip students with a worldview that will help them succeed beyond the institution. This can be done by combining the research of poverty education in the United States, orphan education research in other countries, and the application of biblical principles. Coupling this research with the compassion of Christ will enable Christian educators to work alongside orphanages to better equip OVC to know Jesus Christ and succeed in life.

The word "compassion" is derived from Latin . . . "to suffer with." Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human (Henri Nouwen, as cited in Davis, 2008, p. 111).

May Christian educators become compassionate leaders in the quest to help educate orphans throughout the world.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TWISSELMANN AND DRAYCOTT ARTICLES BY TIM STRANSKE

AN INTRODUCTION

Solomon (Proverbs 18:17) indicates that hearing one side of an argument sounds convincing until you hear the opposing point of view. The next two articles discuss conceptions of social justice, both emanating from scholars that have studied biblical theology and social justice, applying those fields of study to educational systems. Twisselmann, a public school teacher of philosophy and adjunct professor at Biola University, questions whether critical theory's lack of a metaphysical component provides any valid grounding to make social justice judgments, while Draycott, a theologian at Talbot School of Theology, argues for Christians to humbly seek common ground with others in our pluralistic society, teaching social justice to our young.

Twisselmann argues that since the postmodern social justice conception based on critical theory refuses metaphysical grounding, it lacks any meaningful fulcrum to differentiate right from wrong. When postmodern theorists value every culture as "right for themselves" and independent of any outside evaluation, there can be no ultimate "right" or "wrong" when cultural groups disagree. This becomes important when a person or group seeks "justice" that involves people or people groups from different systems or cultures. In a clash of cultural values related to justice, whose conception of justice ought to be utilized? And, who should make this decision? Twisselmann argues that the postmodern-based critical theory lacks the ability to answer these types of questions; therefore, one of the postmodern-based critical theory's central components, social justice, will elude its proponents. Twisselmann suggests that a biblically-based metaphysical conception of social justice provides the grounding needed so that a Christian might pursue social justice in a more coherent way than those using a postmodern philosophical basis to pursue social justice.

Draycott agrees that "justice cannot make sense without truth," but argues that we live in a multicultural world without agreement on fundamental issues. Though only the heart changed by the good news of Christ's death for sin will understand and have the Spirit-empowered ability to live out the social justice envisioned in Scripture, we must live in and teach our children to live in a pluralistic world where social justice is "active and malleable." Draycott claims that the differences in definitions of what is just in our pluralistic world are often not "infinite" but actually quite manageable through democratically negotiated social communication. Where Draycott differs from Twisselmann's argument the most is that Draycott believes Twisselmann "privileges choice . . . in ways that may become hostage to fortune . . ."; whereas, Draycott believes that our social communication necessarily requires the consideration of other's feelings. Exercising freedom in groups where others do not have the means to exercise that freedom can produce unjust situations.

Both authors use the illustration of first graders who purchased ice cream at school while their less-affluent peers looked on . . . are the ice cream purchases a choice without social justice implications? Is the first-grade teacher right to use this socioeconomic difference as a teaching tool regarding social justice? Is it right to consider the teacher a champion of the "oppressed," less-affluent children by calling for a boycott of the school's store?

As you read these two articles, analyze how both authors apply biblical guidelines to social justice issues in our schools. Where is there agreement? Where is there disagreement? With whom do you resonate? Are there errors or questions related to the authors' application of biblical principles? Is there a way to synthesize their ideas into a unified model? As you consider Twisselmann's and Draycott's viewpoints on social justice, how might you extend your own thinking about spirituality, justice and education?



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Tim Stranske (BA Biola University, PhD Claremont Graduate University) was born and Khartoum, Sudan, raised and educated in the 50's and 60's, and has a heart for Africans. After spending 28 years as a teacher and administrator in preschool-12 schools, Tim began working at Biola University full-time in 2003. He teaches educational psychology and philosophy of education at Biola University and serves as the Assistant Dean of their School of Education.



TRUTH, JUSTICE, OR THE AMERICAN WAY? A PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGY BY ERIC TWISSELMANN

ABSTRACT

A review of current philosophy, research, and practice regarding the teaching of *social justice* reveals an unsettling paradox: While there has been a significant movement among educators to infuse and promote ideals of social justice within their curricula, this movement has been largely operating within a postmodern framework which, at its foundation, cannot sustain a unified theory of justice. Within such a postmodern framework, social justice pedagogy may be, at best, a well-intentioned but terribly fragmented social experiment, and at its worst, an unsettling prosecution of political hegemony. This paper will investigate the philosophical roots of this disconnect between theory and practice and the problems that it poses to public and higher education. As a corrective, we must explore the critical relationship between concepts of justice and concepts of truth, realizing that without a proper conception of truth, one cannot pursue (and therefore, presumably, teach) a proper view of justice. An outline of the biblical conception of truth and justice will be presented for the Christian educator who would take seriously—in theory and in practice—the call to promote justice within his/her sphere of influence as an integral part of Christian discipleship.

INTRODUCTION: TWO PROBLEMATIC TENDENCIES WITHIN SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

A cursory review of current educational philosophy and research reveals a deep concern for social justice, both in the United States and globally. Indeed, there is nothing short of “an established research agenda whose focus is on practicing teachers” (Hernandez & McKenzie, 2010, p. 50) to promote the idea of social justice within educational leadership programs afoot here in the United States. However, despite the ubiquity of social justice language, there is anything but consensus for what, precisely, constitutes and qualifies as social justice. Entire essays and books have been written on the subject without asserting any kind of definition or set of criteria (Novak, 2000). Though it could be argued that the term evokes a concept that is so universally familiar that no definition is necessary, in many cases there is actually a reluctance to give any set of necessary and/or sufficient conditions for what would count as social justice education (Johnson, Oppenheim, & Suh, 2009).

This is not to say that social justice education is *never* explicitly defined, as Miller and Engel (2011) offer the following: “Social justice, broadly defined, refers to a condition whereby all people are afforded fair opportunities to enjoy the benefits of society” (quoted in Miller, 2008, p. 821). Hernandez & McKenzie (2010) define social justice as “an interdisciplinary field committed to . . . equality and freedom. Its function is to enhance our understanding of education through a critical examination of the unequal power dynamics in society and offers alternatives to the status quo” (p. 54). However, when one notes the wide variety of working definitions in current use under the broad aegis of social justice education, a grim picture emerges for advocates of social justice education: philosophically, social justice education faces two problems/tendencies that have dire consequences for practice. The first is the tendency to define social justice education too loosely, and thus, fail to advocate anything distinctive. The second tendency is to constrain social justice education within a definition that is too narrow, and in so doing, perpetuate political favoritism towards various special-interest groups.

THE PROBLEM OF A LOOSE DEFINITION

Many social justice theorists seem reluctant to use any sort of normative terminology when describing social justice pedagogy:

... the more we see people invoking the idea of social justice, the less clear it becomes what people mean, and if it is meaningful at all. When an idea can refer to almost anything, it loses its critical purchase, especially an idea that clearly has such significant political dimensions (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011, p. 8).

For this reason, Hyttén and Bettez (2011), have attempted to consolidate the vast body of work that represents social justice theory. Though they identify five general strands (philosophical/ conceptual, practical, ethnographic/narrative, theoretically specific, and democratically grounded) they conclude that “there is both confusion and conceptual looseness in the social justice literature”

(p. 10). Indeed, the majority of current theory reports “little consensus on how social justice ought to be defined” (Funge, 2011, p. 74), let alone put into practice (North, 2006; Dewhurst, 2010).

A case study published by Johnson, Oppenheim, and Suh (2009) illustrates this first definitional problem. Johnson, et al. studied five different teachers who sought to bring a strong social justice component into their curriculum. While they took great pains to question each teacher regarding his/her own values, assumptions, and conceptions of social justice, and while they assert that it is “both possible and essential for new educators to enact social justice curricula in their classrooms in a variety of ways” (p. 294), Johnson et al. ironically do not once offer any kind of definition to the term social justice. Though they seek to “argue that all of the disparate forms of social justice curricula that we observed were compelling and vital,” they offer no unifying definition to govern them. And yet, having not defined what is meant by social justice in the first place, they “hope to expand the definition of social justice,” contending that “a broad and contextually contingent definition of social justice curriculum is one that will best support and encourage burgeoning social justice educators” (p. 294). They advocate that teachers enact a “constellation of curriculum enactments to develop a working vision of social justice teaching in practice” (p. 307) because “it is precisely action and motion that make a definition ‘work’” (p. 308). As we shall see a little later, this has clear echoes of the pragmatist philosophies of James and Dewey, where “truth happens to an idea” (James, 2001, p. 213), but whereas neither James nor Dewey denied the existence of an objective and knowable body of truth, today’s educational landscape has become quite ambiguous on this score.

To see how such ambiguity is detrimental to the application of a coherent, meaningful practice of social justice, one need look no further than the case study itself. In the same sentence, they cite a teacher who “used poetry to promote nonthreatening dialogue” and an elementary school teacher who “challenged students to consider how everyday choices like buying ice cream at lunch time marginalized classmates” (Johnson et al., 2009, p. 299). This pairing of examples is somewhat ironic, since one could reasonably ask how teaching children to ethically second-guess themselves when they enjoy an ice cream cone being sold on campus in the cafeteria does not constitute an antithesis to “nonthreatening dialogue,” and yet, the writers conclude by saying that “the function of a working definition of social justice is not to decide which enactment is more worthy or laudable. Rather, it is to demonstrate that social justice is an active and malleable concept” (p. 309). So malleable, apparently, that these writers would countenance, perhaps even approve of, the ethical interrogation of first graders regarding their ice cream consumption. The fact that the writers of this study could not even raise the question as to the age-appropriateness of the teacher’s decision to initiate this discussion is distressing. The title of their article, “Would That Be Social Justice?” is therefore an ironic one, since an attentive reader would expect that there is an explicit, affirmative answer forthcoming, when, in fact, there is not. In the end, it does not seem to matter how and whether or not what these new teachers are teaching actually is socially just, as long as each teacher is doing something that she feels or believes is socially just.

But how can any meaningful concept of social justice flourish in schools if educators find themselves unable to make value judgments between various kinds of actions, or alternatively, able to make any kind of value judgment they wish? If anything, social justice must include the idea of rightness and fairness, but it would be impossible to do so if we do not allow ourselves to judge, reasonably, between courses of action—even between the decisions of well-meaning teachers. In opposition to the anything goes approach to social justice education, Christman (2010) has argued that “developing a critical consciousness still requires continuity and consistency. Too often, developing a critical consciousness in our students is sporadic among their coursework and often depends on who teaches the course” and that “developing a critical consciousness is too important to leave to serendipity” (p. 109). Echoing the language of Derrida and others, Christman (2010) advocates “introducing students to the language of critique and the language of possibility” (p. 107ff).

THE PROBLEM OF A NARROW DEFINITION

Out of the “wide variety of priorities and visions” (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011, p. 10), however, such zeal has led many social justice advocates to construct/practice a definition of social justice that is too narrow. Zeichner (2011) asserts that social justice education has focused almost exclusively on the way teachers teach students of color who live in poverty “instead of the goal of preparing all teachers to teach all students” (p. 17). Similarly, many social justice education advocates seem to limit their conception of social justice to a very myopic end of the political spectrum. The example, above, of the elementary school teacher who extended her own conception of social justice to her first-graders’ ice cream buying serves as an example here, as well (Goss, 2005). Elsewhere in her

own article, this teacher (who teaches in a poor Chicago neighborhood) admitted to using the movie *A Bug's Life* for what she took to be its clear Marxist undertones (which she apparently favors). Her initiation of the ice cream discussion was to survey her students who had purchased ice cream from the cafeteria and who had not and how those who didn't have any ice cream felt. She especially (even proudly) highlighted the responses of students who thought that it was unfair that some kids could afford to spend 50 cents on ice cream when others could not, and that they should actually stage a boycott in front of the cafeteria. While she paid dutiful regard to those students who thought (against the majority) that they should be free to purchase and enjoy ice cream if they had the means, she reserved her most glowing adjectives for those students who decided they would not buy ice cream anymore, but then added somewhat ruefully that, the next day, many of these children were found enjoying ice cream again anyway, despite their initial resolve.

With this example, we see that the veneer of social justice education can often hide a more radical program. Christman's otherwise irenic and uncontroversial essay just referenced, above itself provides a hint at just how insidious this narrow conception of social justice education is becoming: among her works cited, one finds titles such as *Foundation stones: The construction of gender in early childhood* (Alloway, 1995) and *Rethinking gender in early childhood education* (MacNaughton, 2000). Within social justice education, there is growing advocacy for the "queering" of schools, especially at the elementary level (Letts IV & Sears, 1999), ostensibly to prevent violence against those in the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered community, but laboring on the presumption that (1) it is the job of public education to teach specific sexual ethics; (2) traditional sexual ethics represent an outmoded and bigoted heterosexism; (3) gender is a socially-constructed idea that people are free to define and explore however they choose. Though many practitioners like Christman may (for now) keep the philosophical influence of these voices somewhat muted, there is no denying their influence. As Christman (2010) quotes approvingly from one social justice educator:

I create a lot of tension on purpose, especially initially. Most of the resistance [to social justice education] seems to come from students who identify as strong Christians. These students have a really hard time with not being homophobic...I think they would like to think we live in a classless society. (p. 119)

Ignoring for a moment the unsubstantiated and undefined use of the word homophobic, as well as the apparent confusion of sexual orientation with social class, what is particularly striking here is how some advocates of social justice education are more blatantly pushing the envelope past questions of fairness and rendering to each his/her due. Rather, the social justice label has been misappropriated as part of an agenda that seeks to uncover and supplant traditional, religiously-informed beliefs about human nature with a more radical ideology, one that would (ironically) demand a suspension of moral judgment in the classroom. That is, it expects traditionalists to forgo moral judgments; imposing its moral judgments (i.e., approval of more radical/loose views of human sexuality) is taken to be a justified, perhaps even necessary component to the education of our youngest and most impressionable youngsters.

In a qualitative study done by Reed and Johnson (2010), one high school administrator's own Christian religious convictions were critically evaluated and correlated to her attitudes towards her lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students. Though her remarkable achievements as an administrator in the promotion of equality within the school were duly noted (and even attributed to her deep religious convictions) she was nevertheless criticized for the limitations that her religious faith put on her capacity to enact social justice for her LGBT students, as shown in the contradiction between her own spiritual beliefs and practices and her ignorance or lack of knowledge concerning the LGBT community. Several examples were given from the principal's beliefs and practices as evidence. For one, she was criticized for her reluctance/refusal to refer to a boy who wanted to be identified as a girl as *she*, even on the grounds she gave, namely, that the boy clearly did not look like a girl, and that his own grandmother (and legal guardian) referred to him by his given name and in masculine terms. This principal was also criticized for personally regarding homosexuality as a sin from a biblical perspective, since she had, after all, decided for herself that the Bible did not really forbid women to wear pants, and so why could not she do the same with passages that allegedly forbid homosexuality? And finally, she was criticized for not having, nor planning to initiate, a Gay-Straight Alliance club on campus (p. 401).

It is a rather disconcerting picture of social justice advocacy where an administrator's religious beliefs become targets for deconstruction by theorists who reason and believe from outside that religious system. For one, the comparison of the question of whether or not the Bible teaches that women may not wear pants to the question of whether or not the Bible teaches that homosexuality is sin would be laughable to any serious theologian or student of the Bible, if it did not come laden with such

aggressive, even threatening, sociopolitical undertones. But secondly, we must not miss the subtle hypocrisy at work here: an educator's beliefs and practices are being judged by those outside her belief-system for (allegedly) judging the beliefs and practices of students who fall outside her belief-system. This case represents a rather crass attempt to deconstruct a woman's religious convictions and re-tool them to suit a political/ ideological agenda. Indeed, it has become a standard practice for social justice advocates to leverage religious ideology and institutions, especially those embedded within the community, not for any intrinsic spiritual wisdom and/or truth that they offer, but simply because "they are highly populated and influential" (Miller & Engel, 2011, p. 29). It would seem that a truly tolerant social justice would want to resist such commandeering of the religious by the secular: treating a community of faith as merely a means to some political end (no matter how noble) is to show disrespect to the inherent value of that religious tradition by failing to accept it on its own terms.

Sadly, this example is neither an aberration nor an accident, and it illustrates well how such narrowly conceived strands of educational philosophy are working themselves out in our schools. As we have seen above, there are profound contradictions within current applications of critical theory that threaten the very essence of social justice: a movement which ostensibly exists to challenge stereotypes itself tends to stereotype those who are white, male, affluent, religious, and/or espouse traditional views of gender, marriage, and family; a movement which prides itself in practicing tolerance for all views actively seeks to suppress voices that challenge the hegemony of left-wing ideology in higher academia; a movement which views morality as a socially-constructed (and therefore, ever-changing and malleable) set of values presumes to impose a universal ethic of cultural and moral relativism onto the public sphere; a movement that seeks to cast aspersions on power structures and utterly deconstruct the idea of authority is often blind to its own imposition of power and willingness to become authoritarian. As Freire (1998), an early advocate of social justice education warned, "Knowing has everything to do with growing. But the knowing of dominant minorities absolutely must not prohibit, must not asphyxiate, must not castrate the growing of the immense dominated majorities" (p. 95). The consequences of this second tendency are, perhaps, the more ironic: in fixating exclusively on the marginalizing of minorities (and sometimes only particular minorities), some social justice education advocates of this stripe perpetuate their own brand of social injustice when they minimize, ignore, or even silence/disparage viewpoints that do not align with their ideology.

THE INFLUENCE OF PRAGMATISM, POSTMODERNISM, AND CRITICAL THEORY ON SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

We must turn now towards a philosophical explanation of these two extremes we have surveyed—both the loose and the narrow. At base, each is rooted in the philosophies of pragmatism, postmodernism, and critical theory, and most fundamentally, the theories of truth they began to espouse and embrace. Within the last century, these three intellectual currents have effectively eroded what was once the more widely held correspondence theory of truth and, in turn, left a theoretical and ethical lacunae that cannot sustain any kind of meaningful theory (or practice) of social justice.

John Dewey is, of course, recognized as one of the chief architects of American public education in the 20th century. His philosophy of pragmatism is rooted in the work of William James. Though unintentionally by both James and Dewey, pragmatism deflated the classical, commonsense notion of truth as that which corresponds to reality and turned it into an activity: truth, as James (2001) put it, "happens to an idea" (p. 213). West (1989) summarizes, "[Dewey] rejects Reality as the ultimate court of appeal in adjudicating between conflicting theories—and subsequently any correspondence theory of truth or realist ontology" (p. 99). Under pragmatism, the traditional, metaphysical notion of truth as an "inert static relation" (James, 2001, p. 212) was supplanted by the idea that truth must be useful if it is to be dignified with the title. But since what is useful begs the questions, "for what?" and "for whom?", this re-conceptualization allowed various intellectual and social movements the liberty to enlist truth in whatever way was advantageous to its own agenda. Thus, pragmatism caused the notion of truth to be relativized and up for grabs.

One such manifestation of this progressive notion of truth was postmodernism, which can be characterized by the conviction that there is no trustworthy, over-arching metanarrative or privileged perspective on the world (Ingraffia, 1995). Groothuis (2000) elaborates:

The postmodernist . . . takes truth to be something other than correspondence with reality. Truth is seen as having no reference outside of language itself; it is reducible to power relationships and other cultural dynamics, and cannot be extricated from conflicting perspectives (p. 271).

Illustrative of this view, and bridging the pragmatism of Dewey with the spirit of postmodernism is Richard Rorty, who has sought in the latter part of the 20th century to revive Dewey's pragmatism (West, 1989). In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, he states: "Truth cannot be out there" (Rorty, 1989, p. 5), meaning outside the human mind—only sentences are bearers of truth, and sentences are an invention of human beings.

Since every historian, philosopher, educator, and scientist tends to look at the world through the lens of his or her own experience, culture, beliefs, assumptions, and even, language, postmodernism concludes that there is no common, absolute, reference point we can call "truth." Postmodernism, applied in education as "critical theory," is a deconstructive but equalizing movement in so far as it attempts to lay bare all assumptions, prejudices, and preconceptions, asking the student to become more aware of his or her own bias for the purpose of greater liberation. Since justice is minimally conceived of as fairness (Rawls, 1971), and fairness requires the laying aside of bias, many, like Usher and Edwards (1994), have embraced the postmodern turn as a boon to social justice education. Citing the contribution of Francis Lyotard to postmodern theory and the impetus it gave to social justice education, Usher and Edwards? assert "justice can only be built around the recognition of the variety that exists in language games..." (p. 183). And: "Lyotard's arguments have been used to articulate the need for spaces, including educational spaces for the...little narratives of excluded others (p. 183)". These "localized strategies" are designed, politically, to "provoke questions rather than certainties" and thus, "provide the basis for resistance" (p. 183). As philosopher Gert J. J. Biesta (2001) summarizes, "the relationship between deconstruction, justice, and education is... anything but accidental" (p. 50).

Critical theory also followed the pragmatists' tendency to conflate truth with knowledge—truth is conceived epistemologically as fluid activity, rather than metaphysically as static correspondence-with-reality. Furthermore, critical theory seeks "more questions than certainties" (Usher & Edwards, p. 182), promotes the "democratization of learning" in favor of traditional, "authoritarian" pedagogical models (Freire, 1972), and works to dismantle the social structures that promote inequality and injustice, especially what Foucault (2001) called "regimes of truth" (p. 318). According to Foucault, "'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" and it is "linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it" (p. 318). Thus, when we encounter a text, a speech, an event, an idea, or a policy, we must deconstruct it by asking what kinds of power struggle it represents. Language about what is and what is not the truth has become regarded by those in the academy with not mere incredulity, but with a kind of moral suspicion as well—that truth-claims are "power-plays" in disguise, designed by those in power to oppress those in some minority/marginalized group, especially under the mechanisms of capitalism. Jurgen Habermas and Michael Apple, two of the leading educational philosophers/theorists who have promoted social justice education theory, have advocated this view (Morrison, 2001; Torre, 2001).

MINIMAL CONCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND WHY POSTMODERNISM IS BELIEVED TO SUPPORT IT

In constructing his famous theory of justice, John Rawls (1971) begins with a minimal conception of justice as simply fairness. North (2006) asserts that "all scholars seem to agree on one thing: the liberal belief in citizens as free and equal persons" and that this state of affairs "merits protection" (p. 516). Social justice, then, would seem to require at least three things: (1) fairness/equality of treatment/lack of favoritism; (2) a willingness to hear all sides of the story; and (3) liberation of the oppressed from those who oppress them. Postmodern thought would seem to satisfy these desiderata correspondingly through (1) the rejection of hierarchy and the celebration of equality; (2) an acceptance of local narratives and diverse voices/perspectives as equally valid as more broad, universal, or traditional narratives; and (3) a critique/deconstruction of unequal power structures. And clearly, this seems to encapsulate the application of critical theory into social justice pedagogy, as well. According to Giroux (1991), the postmodern educator's skepticism towards "master-narratives" or the fictitious standard of "universal reason" allows a critique of inequality within the educational system (p. 467). In defense of critical theory as the driving force behind social justice education, North (2006) reflects the postmodern outlook in urging that educators for social justice be both hopeful and "able to accept the impossibility of a utopia free of contradictions and strife," adding that "such a view can help us accept, even desire, the inevitability of contradictions in social life and, in turn, loosen our investments in unproductive orthodoxies and ultimate truths" (p. 526).

However, it seems clear that neither postmodernism nor critical theory can actually sustain a rigorous or even practicable social justice. For one, if truth is not objective, knowable, or communicable, then justice is impossible because justice requires truth telling about the world. We feel righteous indignation when the guilty go free or the innocent are unjustly punished precisely because we know that the truth about what really happened in the world has been suppressed. But in postmodernism, there is a strong

skeptical undercurrent that assumes that there is nothing but biased perspective, and hence, it is irrational to seek any kind of objective truth, let alone justice. As Carr (1998) asserts regarding the impact of postmodern theory on educational philosophy:

...whilst it may well be that the various philosophies of postmodernism contain important insights...it is nevertheless more than likely that these insights have suffered some distortion by association with forms of skepticism about the very possibility of objective knowledge...there can be no doubt that these new forms of skepticism have at least partly contributed to a radical decline of interest in theorizing about knowledge and truth—particularly in relation to questions of learning and pedagogy. (p. xi-xii)

And though they are devotees of postmodernism, Usher and Edwards (1994) acknowledge the tension that exists between postmodern theory and the practice of social justice: “Given the proliferation of language games...it is therefore somewhat problematic that [Lyotard] espouses a particular position as one which could encompass a ‘respect for justice’” (p. 184). Wimmer (2001) concurs: “. . . in every single case, the question [of justice] has to be posed anew in its fundamental undecidability. The individual has no choice but to make judgments and decisions without reference to any pre-given criteriology” (153).

A second problem is that social justice seems to require the existence of moral facts, but postmodernism, critical theory, and social justice education have tended to embrace cultural/ ethical relativism. The absence of moral facts leaves a conceptual vacuum in which social justice education would suffocate, as the fight for social justice cannot be satisfied by resistance-for-resistance’s-sake—true justice requires an aim and a purpose, namely, a right outcome that is truly righteous. At some point in our quest for justice, questions must cease and certainties must be embraced if we are to pursue an outcome that is truly fair, and not just a reversal of some individual’s or group’s fortunes. If truth is relative to individual/cultural beliefs/opinions/ practices, then there can be no moral imperative for teachers and students to celebrate diversity, treat others equally, tolerate the expression of minority opinions, or fight injustice—in ourselves, the classroom, society, or in the world at large. While Giroux (1991) laudably urges that “teachers use their authority to establish classroom conditions” where “racist ideologies and practices...can be called into account” and not treated as merely “the expression of individual views or feelings,” he cripples his own admonition with the astonishing, self-refuting pronouncement that “this is not a form of authority based on an appeal to universal truths” (p. 484). On the contrary, as Callan (1998) has succinctly noted: “Non-judgmental pluralism is a way of giving up on moral reason” (p. 153).

Against the moral skepticism that characterizes postmodernism, Wiggins (1988) has defended the view we are able to make meaningful moral judgments because “what valuational predicates [e.g., ‘just,’ ‘fair,’ ‘good,’ ‘evil’] stand for are properties in the world”; they are “objectively discriminable and can impinge upon practical appreciation and judgment,” and thus, “that practical questions sometimes have more than one answer, and that there is not always an ordering of better or worse answers, is no reason to conclude that good and bad answers cannot be argumentatively distinguished” (p. 160).

CORRECTING SOME UNTRUTHS ABOUT TRUTH

To correct our view of social justice, then, we must have a correct view of truth. There is a tendency within secular educational settings—if it defines truth at all—to conceive of truth as an epistemological and/or psychological construct, rather than a metaphysical presupposition. That is, truth is conceived as somehow conditioned by how the knower is situated in the world, how the knower perceives the world, how the knower feels, and/or what the knower believes. But this is an egregious mistake. First of all, truth is an essential component of knowledge, and not the other way around—there are truths that are not yet known, but nothing can be known that is not true. To say otherwise is to conflate knowledge or truth with belief, but there is surely a meaningful distinction between belief (a psychological state) and a true state of affairs. This is because a state of affairs is what it is independently of whatever I believe about it: Caesar was the emperor of Rome, whether I believe it or not; rocks do not magically turn into unicorns just because I believe with all my heart that they do (or should).

Second, truth is logically prior to knowledge. This is because the acquisition of knowledge involves the discovery of something that is already there, waiting to be discovered. If truth were anterior to knowledge, then one should wonder how it would be possible to discover anything, (e.g., that lead is heavier than aluminum or that the Pythagorean Theorem governs all right triangles). This would require one to see truth as something that is constructed or invented. But it is surpassingly strange to encourage students to pursue knowledge if, in fact, there is no body of truth (external to them) that is waiting to be discovered. A proper view of truth drives us outside of ourselves and into the world that is out there.

Here, we might caution in the other direction, as well: in our zeal for truth, we must not confuse truth with certainty, or even certainty with epistemic justification. We can think of many cases (perhaps within our own teaching) when we have felt certain about a belief we took as fact which, upon closer inspection, we discovered to be false. As Freire (1998) wisely admonished, the educator must “avoid being entrenched in the circuit of [her] own truth” by nurturing the virtue of humility (p. 40). We can and certainly should acknowledge our fallibility to our students and colleagues. But we must come back to this point: humility cannot flourish as a virtue without presupposing the existence of a theoretical, objective body of truth that is external to and quite independent of one’s beliefs about it. The reflective educator cannot content herself with the thought that “well, I have my truth” meaning merely that she has her own belief; rather, she must teach with the conviction that there exists what Francis Schaeffer (1968) often felt the need to distinguish as “True truth.” It is the presumption that there is real truth out there—which we can and do encounter with our minds—that points us and our students to something higher and more ultimate than ourselves, making justice possible in both letter and spirit.

Unfortunately, insofar as social justice education theorists and practitioners accept a postmodern view of truth, they should not regard their own quest for social justice as anything more than just another power play. Of course, those within postmodernism and critical theory might see this as logically coherent, perhaps even virtuously self-consistent: critical theory itself ought to play by its own rules and be subject to the language of critique. Foucault (2001) seems to suggest as much when he wrote, “‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” and that it is “linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it” (p. 318). But such theoretic coherence is meaningless if one does not ultimately believe that the statements generated by one’s system are grounded in or refer to anything in objective reality—if social justice is simply a socially constructed notion that is free to evolve with culture, then there would be nothing essentially or inherently unjust about defunding and dismantling what we now label as the entire social justice enterprise and replacing it with authoritarianism, totalitarianism, or even theocracy. Without truth, social justice education would be just another arbitrary authority structure that we impose on others for any reason we choose. So it is not merely power/authority structures that cause oppression and injustice: rather, it is an underlying attitude of intellectual and moral relativism that has justified and perpetuated the oppression of those with unequal power for the sake of utility and expediency. As Os Guinness states (2010), “without truth there is only manipulation” (p. 47).

Fortunately, there is good reason to reject the postmodern attitude that conflates power and authority of any kind (either epistemological or moral) with abuse and oppression. As philosopher Shirley Pendlebury (1998) has asserted: “Authority of some sort is among the enabling conditions for teaching to accomplish its ends and sustain its goods” (pp. 183-184). Even the desire to promote more subjective ends required by a holistic social justice (e.g., the ethics of caring that feminism and by extension, multiculturalism offer) must be grounded in something objective if we can prescribe it as normative. Far from dividing reason from our passions and sentiments, “a strong objectivity requires us to take subjectivity seriously” (p. 186). Ethicist Christina Hoff Sommers (1993) puts it more pointedly:

How can we hope to equip students to face the challenge of moral responsibility...if we studiously avoid telling them what is right and what is wrong?...To pretend we know nothing about basic decency, about human rights, about vice and virtue, is fatuous or disingenuous. Of course we know that gratuitous cruelty and political repression are wrong, that kindness and political freedom are right and good. Why should we be the first society in history that finds itself hamstrung in the vital task of passing along its moral tradition to the next generation? (p. 178)

SOME CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING TRUTH AND JUSTICE

In light of all this, Christian educators who would teach and practice social justice ought to be on guard against the two definitional problems that have come to characterize much of social justice education today, starting with an affirmation of objective truth. We must resist the kind of moral relativism that is lamented in Judges 21:25, lest we become like Israel when the people merely did “what was right in their own eyes.” All too often, we bend truth to suit our own private agenda. Recall Solomon’s famous rendering of justice to the two women who were disputing about the baby (I Kings 3:16-28): in a scene blurred by hearsay and emotional tragedy (what could evoke more sympathy than a woman whose infant has been kidnapped, except perhaps a woman whose infant has died tragically!), Solomon’s wisdom to administer justice lay in obtaining the truth—that is, which woman’s story was the one that corresponded to reality. As the passage concludes, “When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down,

they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice” (vs. 28). This example should offer encouragement to the Christian educator: while much of American culture is hostile towards the idea of intellectual and moral authority, over and against this decaying postmodern philosophy we must affirm with conviction that there is such a thing as legitimate authority. Otherwise, the pursuit of justice will be ultimately meaningless and ineffectual. In the face of conflicting narratives, a postmodern Solomon would be forced to split the baby after all.

On the contrary, this narrative teaches us that, while determining what is true (and therefore just) is often difficult, it is not impossible when we seek the LORD as the giver of wisdom just as Solomon did. Christian educators must heed the wisdom of Solomon: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). And though we may be tempted to see Solomon as a special case of God’s visitation and empowering, we too are invited to seek wisdom, as James admonishes with a promise to be appropriated in faith: “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (3:5). Christians stand on God’s Word as their moral authority, and it gives solid, wise, objective truth as we seek to emulate God’s just character. It is for this reason that Jesus invoked our Father: “Sanctify them in truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:17).

By following the truth of God’s Word as our ultimate guide for what actually constitutes justice, we will also avoid the opposite peril of practicing a justice that is too narrow/exclusive. As Leviticus 19:15 commands: “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Do not go about spreading slander among your people.” Social psychology confirms that we are more easily persuaded to throw our support/allegiance towards those whom we perceive to be most like us—the liking of others is, in a sense, a manifestation of self-approval (Cialdini, 2007)—but the Bible gives clear and frequent warnings against favoritism of any kind: whether it is a bias towards the rich because of the status, power, and influence their wealth affords them, or whether it is a bias towards the poor because of the pathos that poverty evokes. America today suffers both tendencies: on the one hand, the cultural mainstream broadcasts and embraces a conspicuous materialism/consumerism, and it is clear that wealth and power hold undue sway both in law and in the court of public opinion. On the other hand, there is also the tendency to regard poverty (or even economic inequality) as social injustice simpliciter, and as this latter misconception has become a dominant theme in the more narrow strands of social justice education, a few further remarks are in order. There are many reasons for this. One is the undeniable influence of Marxism on the critical theory that gave birth to social justice education. Rawls (1971) has also helped validate the idea that justice warrants a state-imposed redistribution of wealth. And finally, the field of education in general leans towards the progressive end of the political spectrum, and though a considerable percentage of educators are politically conservative, the most politically dominant organizations that represent teachers (like the NEA) unilaterally endorse and fund the politics of the left.

First of all, this idea misappropriates the word justice because it contradicts the biblical injunction to render justice independently of a person’s economic (and by extension, social) status. It also seems to rest on at least two questionable assumptions: (1) that economic inequality is always the result of oppression, and that therefore (2) justice requires an equality of result, rather than opportunity. While the reigning paradigm among social justice advocates is to view economic inequalities as the result of a wider context of unequal and oppressive social and economic structures that are often beyond the control of the oppressed (North, 2006), the Christian views such phenomena (alternatively or additionally) through a theological context: while Christians believe that both material prosperity and poverty is, ultimately, under God’s control, this conviction should not engender a fatalistic attitude, as there are clear scriptural injunctions to Christians to work towards the easing of poverty and suffering (Leviticus 25:35; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Isaiah 58:6-7; Zechariah 7:10; James 1:27). And while it is true that economic prosperity/poverty can be the result of individual and/or corporate lawlessness, from a biblical perspective, neither economic inequality nor poverty is in itself a moral evil, any more than the capacity to earn/retain material prosperity is, in and of itself, a moral virtue. Indeed, the Bible (as well as common sense) presumes that varying levels of economic prosperity may be the result of factors that are under the control of the individual, e.g., willingness to work, in which case poverty may often be a natural consequence to the moral vice of sloth, rather than material injustice (Proverbs 6:6; 13:4; 20:4; II Thessalonians 3:10).

But finally, we should note that the injunction in Leviticus 19 is followed closely with the command not to slander those in the community: that is, we must not spread untruths about others in order to ruin their reputation and thereby gain an advantage for our own agenda. Telling the truth about one’s neighbors within the community at large is essential to justice, and unfortunately, the

political landscape in the United States, from left to right, is awash in slander, often designed to pit one special interest group against another. Christian educators must resist getting swept into the kind of political mudslinging that characterizes our discourse about important issues, and we must help our students discern truth from error in all forms of public communication.

The book of James asks, “Why are there fights and quarrels among you?” and immediately gives the theological answer: “from lust and envy” (4:1). At the root of all injustice is the sin that resides in the human heart and tempts us to pursue more than our fair share of good out of selfish desire—the unjust person is what Aristotle calls an “overreacher” (Book V, Ch. I, 9; p. 68). In this way, the poor are just as susceptible to the sin of envy and greed as the rich, and many politicians exploit this human sin to their advantage by fomenting an envious hatred and slander of the greedy rich among the poor and middle class. Likewise, identity politics often trades on the insular, myopic interests of minority or special-interest groups in a way that engenders, rather than eliminates, an us-versus-them mentality. Neither end of the political spectrum is immune from criticism here: injustice persists in the United States and in the world at large because all of us tend to view our own interests as of primary importance. In so doing, we blind ourselves to what is true about our situation, and this self-blinding knows no racial, cultural, religious, socioeconomic, sexual, or physical barriers.

Throughout my time of researching and writing this paper, the United States has continued to watch the unfolding of the case involving the tragic shooting of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman in a Florida suburb in February 2012. What began months ago as a firestorm of outrage from a public that was led to believe the incident was a case of unmitigated and unprovoked stalking and racial-profiling of a black teenager has now cooled to reflect a new public-majority opinion that Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, shot Martin in self-defense. My point in relating this tragic story is not to take sides. Rather, it is to illustrate how easily we take sides on questions of social justice before all of the facts come to light. It is clear through the media coverage of this story that many special interest groups sought to use this tragedy merely to promote their own agendas on various issues, ranging from racism to gun rights. Often, we are quick to cry “injustice!” on behalf of ourselves or the group with which we would like to identify, only to admit later that no injustice has actually occurred, and so it is clear that there is a difference between feeling wronged and actually being wronged.

Ten Elshof (2009) identifies several epistemic mechanisms/psychological strategies by which we typically (and quite effectively) suppress our knowledge of truth and thereby deceive ourselves: attention-management, procrastination, perspective switching, rationalization, resentment, and groupthink. While a full treatment of each of these phenomena falls beyond the scope of this present paper, I believe they bear further study and application to our discussion here: no doubt they describe in finer detail the means by which the human heart not only perverts justice, but also justifies doing so. In brief: we must be on guard against self-deception (willfully blinding ourselves to truths we know and/or find uncomfortable) and groupthink (allowing others to help us avoid truth/reason and thereby excuse ourselves, ethically) when it comes to advocating for and teaching about social justice.

Clearly then, Christians should not accept the notion that social justice education is a panacea to all society’s injustices. Neither can we accept Rousseau’s idea that man is basically good and it is only society that corrupts him (1762) nor Plato’s idea that we fail to choose “the Good” out of mere ignorance (c380 BX). The optimism of these philosophers towards human nature has fostered a high view of formalized education, an optimism that is shared by many educators today and drives much of social justice education. But the Christian educator should be wary of seeing social justice education alone as ultimately transformative, either here in the United States or anywhere else in the world. We must take seriously the fact that the unregenerate mind has a tendency to twist whatever it is taught for its own selfish ends. Sin—both by our inheritance and by our own initiative—corrupts even our best intentions. In the end, we face a rather interesting prospect: social justice education offers the possibility of bringing the ideas of sin and evil back to the level of social consciousness.

CONCLUSION

Despite the grim picture painted here, I believe the Christian educator emerges with a unique hope. It is only through a consciousness of our total inability—on our own—to act justly in the world that we begin to understand our deepest needs (Romans 3:20), and if the problem *is* ourselves, then the solution must be beyond ourselves. Writing at a time when social justice education was still a relatively new movement, Catholic scholar/theologian Russell Butkus (1983) offered Christian educators this vision:

Like Freire's pedagogy, education for justice must be utopian in nature. That is, we must be empowered by our vision of the Kingdom of God. If doing justice is going to be perceived as "good news," then it must be proclaimed in relation to the "good news" of God's reign. Hope can be great motivation. As Christians it is the hope of God's Kingdom that infuses our lives with meaning and purpose. It is that hope that is truly realizable when we hunger for, work for, and educate for justice. (p. 155)

Social justice, education, and Christianity are all characterized by the hope of something better. I believe the word for this something better is *grace*, a concept that we in the United States, often confuse with justice because of our pernicious attitude of entitlement. We think God, or society as a whole, owes us something. Nothing could be further from the truth. Justice only demands that we get what we deserve—that which we have by right. Grace and mercy extend to us what we do not deserve, but what we do in fact need, given our depraved condition. And in turn, we seek to promote grace, mercy, and justice to those who most need it because of what Christ has done for us in laying down his own life on our behalf, "the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18). In this way, we who have been justified in Christ ought to lay down our own lives for the students we serve.

As a Christian educator teaching literature and philosophy in a public high school, I walk a tenuous line: I want my students to learn to think truthfully, critically, objectively, and justly. I want to inspire them to be more kind, generous, patient, peaceful, honest, and virtuous citizens. But I also know—because both my theology and my experience tell me—that the intellectual tools I am giving my students will not be used in a neutral fashion. In the end, they will either use the tools of logic, critical thinking, literary analysis, and philosophy to construct, defend, and live out a worldview in which truth and justice reign, or a worldview characterized by falsehood and injustice. In our instruction, in our educational policies, and in ourselves, we must acknowledge and be wary of our penchant for truth-suppression. In the interest of securing justice for all people, we should help our students become more sensitive to this human tendency and instead become truth-tellers. But we must begin with ourselves. As it says in Psalm 51:6: "Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom."

May we desire truth, and may we know justice in our time.

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ERIC TWISSELMANN

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THE AMERICAN WAY TO CHOOSE ICE CREAM: A RESPONSE TO ERIC TWISSELMANN BY ANDY DRAYCOTT

ABSTRACT

A response is offered to Eric Twisselmann's analysis and critique of social justice pedagogy, highlighting areas of theological agreement. An understanding of justice as *social* is explored through the concept of communication. Education as social communication of intergenerational learning is shaped by concerns for justice. The connection of justice and truth expounded by Twisselmann is critically endorsed, surfacing questions about the importance of choice in his account. How Christians may peaceably suffer as witness in current pedagogical debates is explored in final reflections.

WHY SOCIAL JUSTICE?

It is hard to imagine what justice might mean without it being social, but I suppose the conjunction gains traction over more restricted legal codifications of justice. These more confined notions might be prefixed with criminal or penal, or according to spheres of social action, with civil or military. Justice might be defined according to a broad disciplinary area, giving us economic or philosophical or biblical justice. We might take it that, albeit only certain specialist vocations would require training in these restricted areas, anyone might show an intellectual curiosity. Lawyers and judges must know criminal justice, even if a democratic order supposes that citizens more broadly have an interest in the sweep and direction of action in this domain. Commanders and their soldiers on active service ought to know the requirements of military justice and international law, even if military lawyers and police would exercise the specialist technical knowledge. Still citizens might care to exercise concern over the broad tenets of international law regarding war and its conduct, we should suppose, if only to keep their military representatives accountable to political society. It could be the case that scholars assume they explore their disciplines in ivory towered isolation, exercising little care for ground level practicality. Yet inasmuch as their research participates in the societal conversation about the good, and about right action, society has a right to demand of its leading intellectuals and teachers, or at least of the further deployment of their findings, that justice be a key consideration. That after all is the logic of teaching – it is a public communication of learning across generations for the common good of the society, fostering the task of education. Education supposes and presumes upon society for its logic. The ordering of society around what is true and good for the participation of all is the concern of justice. Education is a significant component of social justice.

How then may social justice be a feature of the educational endeavor? I want to unpack a little further, in response to Eric Twisselmann, the question of what is meant by justice in which society would have an interest. And what part should that interest bear upon the education of children? This, to me, is the driving concern of Twisselmann's article 'Truth, Justice, or the American Way?' My answer draws loosely on the political theology of Oliver O'Donovan (2005) and his explorations of political action as judgment in the context of effective social communication.

AMERICAN (AND) CHRISTIAN CONCERNS FOR JUSTICE

I have indicated why it might be that democratic societies, in particular, ought not leave definitions of justice to specialists and technocrats. We need not exercise too great a fancy to imagine sociopolitical regimes where non-specialist or unauthorized recourse to public reflection on questions of justice might be downright dangerous because viewed as subversive. Having done so, we should recognize in the American way a democratic tradition in which we take comfort. This, in part, is what underlies Twisselmann's concern about what he takes to be the authoritarian hegemony of a certain kind of social justice educational agenda. His concern is a democratic and American one. His concern is not only such, however. His concern is also a deeply Christian one.

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, THEOLOGY AND JUSTICE

The United States' concern for social justice is important as a civilizational achievement that takes up key biblical and Christian convictions. A fistful of such convictions suffice for display here. Each human is of worth before God and therefore before fellow

humans. That worth constitutes a *prima facie* claim to be a member of society. That is to say that, irrespective of legal niceties that serve the goods of border justice, for example, the physical presence of the human person in a place dignifies that place as the locus of encounter with and mutual human regard from any other human.

Mentioning place recognizes the truth secured in the incarnation that humans are not persons abstractly, as just punctual, transferable bearers of inalienable rights. The uniqueness of the incarnate Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of Israel, irrefutably grounds humans in their distinct histories and embedded communities. The ensuing ecclesiological discovery is that the saints - those baptized, and so dead to self and alive in Christ - find that '[t]here is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female,' (Galatians 3:28) such is their oneness in Christ Jesus. Yet that oneness is diverse as mediated by the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. The body has many members, all of whom are necessary to the building up of the body for the common good. It is oft remarked that the Spirit's emboldening of speech in every member of the community of the church is the prophetic demonstration of democracy-under-God. Lastly, but most significantly, as the Spirit bears God's people to ever-renewed reconciliation, He does so as bearing the church toward the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God in Christ's future return – as still this embodied, emplaced, crucified and risen GodMan. Our understanding of eschatology, of last things, does not halt the social life of the church in pause mode, nor the historical life of societies and nations, but rather, in mission, Christians live as participants in their societies – in their place of belonging. Though they are sometimes welcomed, sometimes persecuted, they are living toward the common goal of history that comes from outside natural and historical progress in the advent of the already redeemed Redeemer, Jesus. This latter confidence keeps humans from holding utopian perfectibility as the attainable goal of their own endeavors. In this theological sense then, Americans are entitled to an American account of justice that is tied to the language and history and culture of this place, all the while recognizing that the Christian voice in this place knows that the true knowledge gleaned from this perspective is always the partial story of human hope and wisdom that will gladly bow and welcome the full revelation of social justice in the coming fullness of the Kingdom of God.

JUSTICE AS COMMUNICATION

I agree with Twisselmann that justice cannot make sense without truth. At best we could have a chaos of social justices, at worse a smorgasbord of constructed individual fiats barked out without any social desire to communicate. These are, however, deeply anti-social visions where humans no longer pretend to be the bearer of claims to communication in society. We are no longer, on this prospect, limited to women being from Venus and men from Mars, but everyone is on their own individual planet in solipsistic intergalactic orbit. A world really no longer exists. But Twisselmann stakes out vital ontologically realist terrain – the world does exist. Christians cannot abide any such counter realist moves with a defeated shrug so long as our mission is empowered by the Spirit of the Son who was given by God in love precisely for the world. Nor can we suppose that education is anything less than an induction of young humans into the manifold ways of communication and therefore social justice in a shared world.

If all this is true theologically, social justice can never be a question of instantiating a state of affairs that is statically just. And this is where I may make Twisselmann nervous. Communication as the medium of human lives lived in society is an always-mobile reality. In the church the Spirit does not work our unity despite our embodied individuality and diversity but rather through it. Just so, in society community is constantly forged in human encounter shaped by the intercommunication of multiple narratives. No individual human chooses his or her own identity, however much their choices may constitute a vital stream of how that identity is lived out. Theologically understood, the multifaceted quality of human identity is a created good, a redeemed affirmation, and also a fallen battle zone. We are sinners, we are made in the image of God – we are socialized into both virtue and vice. The task of social justice cannot be to efface that battle or even, as Twisselmann well observes, to suppose that the "battle of vice and virtue" is just an old fashioned term for what enlightened souls would recognize to be a range of options from which moral judgment should be suspended. As he is rightly concerned, any proposal to indefinitely suspend judgment as an account of justice is really a declaration, even an imposition, of an end-time state of affairs that is statically just so long as procedure is followed. Such end of history accounts ought to be recognized as harbingers of a totalitarian end of human society and true communication. Social justice would effectively degenerate into an encapsulation of each individual in the non-communicative act of never demanding an encounter with any other encapsulated individual. Social justice education would then be anything but social.

What then are we to make of Twisselmann's criticisms of the social justice pedagogy? His reading of justice in the instance of Solomon endorses a view of justice as the continual task of judgment in wisdom occasioned by sin. This task is required not just of

ruling authority but by all in the vicissitudes and serendipities of human communication and miscommunication in society. Even prophecy must be tested, weighed and discerned. As in the case of Solomon and the contest of mothers, as also in cases of prophecy, the testing of the judgments reached lies in the moral life authorized by the judgment. The baby is brought up by its natural mother and not a spiteful death-dealing thief; prophecy is tested as the good is held fast and evil is shunned (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22). So the goal of this social and therefore human and therefore non-static justice could not be any crude goal of equality, but rather one of equity. Equitable treatment rather than equal treatment is analogous rather than strictly mathematical. It calls for moral imagination as displayed by Solomon rather than an actuarial account that might split the baby in two. Such a judgment we would recognize as social impaired. So then what might this look like in education?

THE TASK OF SOCIAL JUSTICE – FROM ICE CREAM TO SEXUALITY

Social justice as a human task is a communicative endeavor. Social justice cannot replicate the judging and making righteous of the human heart that is the reality of regeneration, repentance and faith, justification, and sanctification. Social justice pedagogy then will not be a universal panacea to the world's ills. The gospel remains then the only good news of that scope. This does not mean, however, that recognition of the appropriate limits of social justice pedagogy renders it moot. Rather, in keeping with the humility that truth requires, we can affirm that social justice education is vital for children and young people growing up in society where our communication is fraught with contest and difference.

Let me examine then Twisselmann's chosen example of the ice-cream boycott. Twisselmann supposes that this is an obviously ludicrous example of political correctness gone mad. He uses this example in two parts of his argument. First, he highlights it coupled with another example as an instance of a loose definition of social justice. Twisselmann is distressed about the age-appropriateness of an ethical discussion of ice-cream consumption. At first swipe, he is concerned that definitions of social justice are "active and malleable," to use the phrase he cites. But I have claimed that justice must be active and malleable as a communication tool of society. I would hold that its malleability, as with any material substance, is not infinite but only as appropriate to its corporeal structure, so that I would want to affirm, as above, that the very notion of society for which justice is a good requires common communicative ground. If social justice pedagogy enables students to recognize the context of even mundane decisions as one of communication and negotiation of various goods, even ice cream, it seems an appropriate approach to take. In fact, it may be that age appropriateness is the key differential criterion compared to the use of poetry to promote non-threatening dialogue.

Twisselmann's real problem with the ice cream example is, in the second instance, with its myopic or narrow or even radical definition of social justice. Now I'll confess right now that I read the movie *A Bug's Life* as one, more, trite individualistic, American dream, "I believe I can fly" refutations of anything even vaguely resembling communism, so I am not employing the same hermeneutic lens as the Chicago neighborhood teacher. But then, neither would I want to imply that, undertones or otherwise, there might not be anything to learn from Karl Marx about the modern situation.

If justice is about local judgments that communicate the good and the goods of life among people, why should not the observation that some can afford and some cannot afford the treat of eating ice cream for dessert be worthy of examination? Why should this be described as "ethically second guessing themselves when they enjoy an ice cream cone?" The social justice at issue here is surely not the moral goodness or evil of eating ice cream (as if the fact that it is sold at the campus cafeteria and therefore officially endorsed by the school authorities settles the question). Rather the teacher may be indicating that the attitude that says, "I can afford to buy it and so am free to do so," means, "I never need to ask or care if others are as free as me." And if human freedom were merely a function of my individual resources and maximization of my freedom of choice, we should care about society very little indeed. But if we think that society and the just communication of goods in society is a hallmark of human freedom, then the exercise might serve to make students aware whether or not the purchase of ice cream is merely a function of choice. The student who cannot afford to buy ice cream feels it is unfair that his friend can. That feeling threatens their friendship. Their communication and camaraderie in class or at recess is shaded by this hitherto unacknowledged but long present difference. What happens when the difference is made public in the class is that the eating of ice cream no longer functions as just one of those things that is a matter of free choice. Students learn of each other's desires to participate to the full in the goodness the cafeteria has to offer and recognize that not all have free access. Is the class a failure when the ice cream boycott fails? I would argue not, if it has raised awareness that freedom in society is not determined solely by individual choosing. Only privileged individuals can proceed

through life with a consumer mentality that lives the dream of getting just what you chose. Might the class have allowed the students to see each other not only as consumers of education but as persons with multifaceted lives that translate in this instance into different spending power in the school cafeteria? Might some, thinking more readily of the health of their friendships, now lean toward mutuality and free sharing or occasional gifting of ice cream?

Here I detect an irony in that Twisselmann's implicit defense of consumer freedom here is precisely what he decries in relation to sexuality in the following paragraphs. I do not see this position on freedom of consumption or on bounded public accounts of human sexuality as contradictory because I hold to the same reality beliefs that he does. But I am concerned that his reasoning privileges choice more than I would care to in ways that may become a hostage to fortune in these kinds of social justice debates.

The good of participating in society through communication and judgments toward the common good is secure, as we have noted, in the vital respect of each person as a communicative member. What that member of society feels and thinks is then important for the determination of how any particular judgment is to be communicated. So let us take the instance of sexuality. My judgment on this issue is bound to a critique of human freedom as unfettered freedom of choice such that people suppose they are free only insofar as they may choose to act without encountering communicative judgment. That is, I am free to be who I am as a person only if how I choose to express who I am is not questioned in relation to the good of society. This is a deeply antisocial, individualistic, and consumerist posture akin to the children who need never know or care that a peer cannot afford ice cream. Twisselmann rightly criticizes a relativist version of social justice that effectively dismantles communicative judgment altogether such that any individual's rights to self-expression automatically bars social judgments that might come in material form of provision or not of, for example, transgender bathroom access. Of course, this antisocial logic cannot be sought by Christians resistant to these aberrations of justice. That is, Christians cannot take opposing positions to those with whom they are in disagreement, and so effectively isolate Christian social postures as rights claims to say whatever we should want in retaliatory aggression. Nor can Christians hope or deem it a good thing to adopt a posture of social communication that denies or occludes difference and feelings of hurt established by difference. So sexual attraction, the vitality and importance of non-sexual friendship, and the deeply affirmed psycho-physiological reality of human life that Christians recognize in the incarnate Christ will all be areas that education will address at some stage, again subject to judgments of age appropriateness, but not anti-social veto.

POVERTY, EDUCATION, AND REGAINING SIN

Twisselmann recognizes that determining truth in the fluidity and complexity of life is difficult for the task of judgment. He rightly recognizes in his discussion of justice in relation to poverty that economic inequality is not unjust *per se*. But when he claims that poverty is never in itself a moral evil, I demur. I object because Twisselmann's contrast at this point is not with good but with virtue. This suggests that poverty might be being viewed here as a moral failure of character, as he goes on to point to factors within the control of an individual and the damage of the vice of sloth. But if the "moral" of moral evil pertains only to human actions in society, then poverty is in itself an evil. For poverty is nothing less than an inability to participate in society and its judgments because of the marginalization of communication with all energy bent toward the desperate effort to cling on to survival. This is also why poverty is both an absolute and relative term—absolute in relation to the basic realities of sustaining human life through food, clothing, shelter, and companionship, as also relative in relation to the configurations of society and the demands of participation in a dignified manner. (Companionship stands out as odd in this list and should not be understood as constituting a right to friendship but rather as an absolute recognition that flourishing human life is bound to social solidarity at the core of our identity.) When a person of worth before God is so marginalized by poverty, or race, or sexuality, or religion, or any other marker of difference so as to be ignored, forgotten, or worse—actively oppressed, in social communication in thoughts, words, and material forms—it is a proximate good of education to raise these persons to the attention of society, giving them confidence and voice so that they can be participants in the society. This society is not beholden to their identity accounts as trumps to majority claims, but it is interested in sustaining the nexus of communication that explicitly and perhaps legally, but more mundanely, socially and materially economically, forms judgments that shape the possibilities of a good life toward the peaceable common good of the earthly city. This is not yet the kingdom of God and much that distresses Twisselmann distresses me too. But too much of the social communication around contested claims to justice has forsaken the civility for which a society is constituted. Social justice education may need to recognize that certain claims on its curriculum are deeply anti-social in pursuing an individualistic American dream – whether for the consumption of ice cream or the consumption of marriage. If, as Twisselmann hopes, social justice education may yet hold out the promise of a retrieval of the ideas of sin and evil, I trust that these not be the narrowly individualistic

and asocial versions that, in pointing to the problem of the human heart, fail to see how our hearts are always already intertwined in social desire and imagination.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

A number of questions surface as I follow Twisselmann's trajectory. I do not think we disagree necessarily on the theological goods that are instantiated in a modern pluralistic democracy like that of the United States. If America has lost its way then, for Twisselmann at least, the purportedly neutral pragmatic rights agenda of a post- Dewey, post-modernist identity politics is the detour that leads to the distressing present.

His closing confidence is grounded in grace as the something better than entitlement that Christians can bring to education. God's grace in the gospel does orient us to grasp a better hold on justice in his complex world. Why should grace be contrasted with entitlement? This, lest there be doubt, must certainly be the case soteriologically. The judgment that ultimately counts is the justifying judgment of God met in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Yet precisely because that judgment is a vindicating judgment, the questions of penultimate justice are ours with which to truly grapple. Just so, we need not set grace of salvation against entitlement of creation. It is the grace of God that gives back to us our lives and the historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts into which we are called to missionally join our fellow humans in exposing fear and offering peace. We are entitled to contend for that truth. The peace toward which we aim is penultimate and not utopian. It does not suppose that a social state of affairs still less a political state such as the United States, can ever be the kingdom of God.

At the end of the day, of course, any teaching worthy of the name is social justice education. A pretense otherwise would itself be trading on an anthropology far from biblical that views children as free agents of rational choice and so encourages them to consume their education for what they may individualistically profit from it. This would further suppose that, so long as everyone else is equally mentally free to choose, justice is served. All that is needed for the Christian then to be satisfied is that that freedom be exercised for our moral values (an economic term used advisedly). But truth is not a piece of merchandise that can be bought and sold. It is lived out. My fear is that a logic of choosing the right values feeds a consumer capitalist account of justice without constraint. So educated we find individuals, Christians or not alike, declaring Corban and giving to the market of lifestyle instead of to the priest – but still neglecting parents, widows, orphans, and the poor, as they invest in a worldview of justice that shores up their privilege as choosers on the earth. This is also a justice of sorts, it communicates particular rendition of the American way.

My contention is only this, let us be sure as we look out on the field of education from the vantage of scriptural wisdom, empowered by the Spirit, supported through tradition, and eager for God's future, that we do not mistake the Kingdom for values - conservative or otherwise. The ways in which humans in the United States and beyond navigate the pluriformity of the good in discerning truth and accordingly communicating and distributing that truth spiritually, intellectually, and materially are manifold. Twisselmann does us a favor in alerting us to trends and confusions in some contemporary United States social justice education. Christians in education need great wisdom to know how to bring truth prudentially to bear on their everyday lives and those of their students. Forming citizens who do not throw up their arms at the first claim for truth is vital, but so is recognizing an obligation to enable social communication of difference without fear, microaggression, or violence. If social justice has come to be reduced to articulating minority voices and rights, it may be that these are voices that must be heard. Christians who heed the social justice reality of education may find themselves taking up their crosses in seeking social solidarity toward peaceable common good with those with whom they strongly disagree. Giving up on agreement is a totalitarian gesture of hopelessness that sees no end to history other than what I can fashion according to my view. Christians have a greater hope, and so can pursue their strong disagreements, not as entrenched positions, but as social communication. In this way, Christian teachers and their students who are willing to engage conversations not of their own choosing, as a form of suffering, will witness to greater civil and eschatological hope, grounding their communicative judgments from place to place, year to year



ANDY DRAYCOTT

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Draycott enjoys time with his family, laughing with friends, cycling and playing soccer, watching cricket and rugby, and reading for pleasure and learning.



BOOK REVIEW: JESUS FOR REVOLUTIONARIES (ROBERT CHAO ROMERO) BY NATALIE M. ANNA

Jesus is for revolutionaries because Jesus was, and is, revolutionary. As Romero mentions in *Jesus for Revolutionaries*, “Jesus, the Savior of the world and God in the flesh, was raised in the hood and chose inner city drop-outs to lead the most powerful and transformative social movement which the world has ever seen” (p. 78). *Jesus for Revolutionaries* merges hard-hitting, biblical truths with a conversational tone that gives new life to ideas of justice that have been around for 2,000 years. Romero uses historical, personal, and otherwise relevant true stories to give flesh and bones to proven facts about the social justice issues of affirmative action; poverty, classism; and racial, cultural, and gender diversity.

From the very beginning, the main idea is revealed: the intersection of being a follower of Jesus and pursuing social justice. *Jesus for Revolutionaries* is an unflinching look at how being a follower of Jesus requires Christians’ attention and efforts in helping the “least of these” in a variety of ways. Sadly, many have become discouraged or even walked away from Christianity because of how it has been horribly misrepresented. On the other hand, many Christians have denied the biblical mandate of pursuing justice. Romero shows us a better way: love through justice.

Jesus for Revolutionaries is broken down into 17 small chapters, which provides an easy way to track from topic to topic. The readers always know what the author is addressing next. Because the cause of justice is shown to be close to God’s heart, there are over-arching truths that bind seemingly different issues together. God cares for the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed, in whatever situation they may be. Through Christ, all of these oppressed are redeemed and given new purpose.

Romero effectively begins with “student stories from the revolution.” The readers learn of students who were intrigued by the idea of Jesus, but were repulsed by Christianity because they saw it as a tool of oppressors. They walked away because Christians had forgotten John 13:25, “They will know that you are my [Jesus’] disciples, if you love one another” (NIV). As an alternative to the sinful way of treating others, Romero then moves to “God’s Equal Protection Clause.” Romero’s explanation of God’s Equal Protection Clause serves as the biblical basis for social justice. All humans are made in God’s image, and as such, it is offensive to God when anyone, especially those who call themselves Christians, oppress or marginalize others.

After establishing a solid biblical basis for social justice, the book moves into discussing the issues. Chapters 2-5 deal with immigration, particularly from Latin American countries. It is here that Romero argues that it is wholly un-Christ-like to accept their labor and yet despise their presence. These chapters identify the immense contributions made by immigrants. Most people do not realize that Latinos contribute 33 times more to the economy than they drain through social services. From immigration reform, Romero addresses affirmative action, which is covered in chapters 6-7. It is here that the author suggests a novel idea: Jesus invented affirmative action. By choosing students (the disciples) from some of the least prestigious backgrounds and utilizing them in revolutionizing the world, Jesus demonstrated the principle of the upside-down Kingdom. By breaking the norms, Jesus showed that all have equal access to a relationship with God.

Unfortunately, throughout history, many Christians have twisted Christianity in order to accommodate their political beliefs. Romero explains how this has caused great damage to countless people. Instead of listening to the God of justice, mercy, and love, Christians have warped their interpretations of the Bible to justify wars, slavery, and epidemic prejudice.

Romero is firm in asserting that Christianity is not identified with *any* political party, conservative or liberal. This assertion will make some uncomfortable, no doubt. However, readers are reminded that their allegiance lies with a risen Savior who gave up His own life in order to identify with *them*.

Romero contends that colorblindness is not the solution; only Christ’s solution of understanding and redemption is adequate. Less talked about in Christian social justice books is gender, but Romero does not shy away from the controversial topic. It is quickly shown through the story of Deborah and Jael that women can be fierce leaders and mightily used for God.

Romero continues to maintain good critical thinking skills throughout the final chapters of *Jesus for Revolutionaries*. All along, there is no question where Romero stands on an issue, but he never expresses himself in such a way that unfairly alienates anyone. He also delineates the consequences of this country's past mistakes and considers the implications of his own viewpoint; that is, God's view of diversity is that each person glorifies God in a unique way. Romero reminds his readers of historical issues that prove Christians have not always embraced this concept. He then examines modern day classism and the historical notion of Manifest Destiny. Romero utilizes known facts to illustrate that these stances have caused blemishes on people's view of God. Despite the fact that Christianity has often been misrepresented, Romero asserts that God always raises up a remnant that more accurately carries His name. Romero offers this list of names: Bartolomé de las Casas, Roger Williams, Bishop Oscar Romero, William Wilberforce, Lucretia Mott, César E. Chávez, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Teresa, and Jesus. He next asks, "What do they all have in common?" They were revolutionaries who understood their roles as ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Something unique about this book is that it does not leave the reader thinking, "Okay, what do I do now?" The last two chapters conclude the book with a thorough, though not exhaustive, list of resources and practical ways to get involved in almost all aspects of social justice, from urban poverty to gender to human trafficking to microfinance to immigration.

Any good teacher will tell you that an effective lesson draws the learner in, engages them, and leaves with a desire to learn more. *Jesus for Revolutionaries* does just that. At the end of each chapter, there are PraXis questions, which guide the reader into a deeper, more personal understanding of the ideas presented. At the end of the book, there are also appendices: a practical manifesto for the Christian revolutionary, a list of further multimedia resources, and a study guide.

Is Romero demanding? Yes. Is he unapologetic? Yes. Does it work? Yes. Jesus was a revolutionary that radically loved and cared for the poor, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised. His followers are called to do the same.

Romero's arguments are well supported. Although they are not all listed, there are 2,000 verses on God's heart for the poor and the marginalized. Scripture is consistently and effectively used, and in addition to biblical support, Romero uses both fact and story to make convincing arguments. The author's intentions were accomplished, because even though he is an admittedly impassioned writer, he manages to maintain a balanced view. As a scholar with an undergraduate degree in history, a J.D. from Berkeley, and a Ph. D. in Latin American history, in addition to his own personal experiences as Chinese-Mexican-American, his arguments effectively stand.

A balanced, objective view is maintained throughout the book. Where others may have resorted to anger or hostility towards the perceived oppressor, Romero refrains from such behavior and instead operates in grace and Christian love. As a reader of European descent, the text never once felt alienating or personally accusatory. Rather, Romero called out sins inherent in all cultures, providing a 360-degree perspective on social justice.

Jesus for Revolutionaries' main limitation is that it focuses primarily on Latinos and African Americans, with very little statistical or historical information on Asian Americans or Native Americans. However, Romero's intention was never to cover an exhaustive array of issues. In addition, the reader is more than equipped to take the lessons learned from *Jesus for Revolutionaries* and apply them to all people groups.

The book title is accurate. Not that Jesus fits comfortably in the views of the revolutionary-minded, but that Jesus himself was a staunch advocate for justice, both directly through His words and indirectly through His actions. When looking to be engaged in social justice, there is no better example than Christ.

Jesus for Revolutionaries attracts a unique market. Written for those who "care passionately about issues of race and justice, but do not know how to reconcile faith with an abiding concern for social change" (p. 26), it is an appropriate book for both those who have not been shown an accurate portrayal of Jesus and for those who follow Christ and are looking for a manifesto explaining obedience to biblical commands to fight for justice.

This book echoes sentiments written by other Christians coming from a multicultural perspective, such as Richard Twiss and Kevin Blue. They are all zealous for the cause, but they all hold their views and actions under the light of God's word and let His heart influence their actions. They are similar in balanced views and in rejecting partisan politics.

Jesus for Revolutionaries is like having a conversation with a well-versed, passionate friend. This book is greatly needed because there are Christians who need to hear that social justice is not a calling for *some*, it is a mandate for *all*. Christians might not all be on the front lines, but there are myriad ways that they can live their lives in ways that challenge systemic injustice and be the hands and feet of Jesus. *Jesus for Revolutionaries* explains just that.



JESUS FOR REVOLUTIONARIES

Robert Chao Romero, PhD

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ROBERT CHAO ROMERO

Professor Robert Chao Romero considers himself fortunate to be able to study himself for a living. With a Mexican father from Chihuahua and a Chinese immigrant mother from Hubei in central China, Romero's dual cultural heritage serves as the basis for his academic studies. His research examines Asian immigration to Latin America, as well as the large population of "Asian-Latinos" in the United States. His first book, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (2010), tells the forgotten history of the Chinese community in Mexico. For his next project, Romero has begun research on the history of Mexican segregation in the United States and the important, but much overlooked Mexican desegregation cases of *Doss v. Bernal* (1943), *Lopez v. Seccombe* (1944), and *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946). Before he joined the UCLA César E. Chávez Department Chicana/o Studies in 2005, Romero was a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the UCLA Department of History and School of Law. He is also a former Ford Foundation Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellow. Romero received his J. D. from UC Berkeley and his Ph.D. in Latin American history from UCLA.



NATALIE M. ANNA

Natalie M. Anna (BA Biola University) is a current Biola University student, working on her MAEd with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction. Her research interests lie in elementary education, intercultural studies, social justice, parent engagement, and bridging the gap for underprivileged students. She is passionate about being a Christ-following teacher in the public school setting. A southern California native, she has travelled in India and is currently studying in Vienna, Austria.



BOOK REVIEW:

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE DIFFERENT OTHER:

A RENDEZVOUS OF GIVING AND RECEIVING (FAUSTIN NTAMUSHOBORA)

BY KAY HENRY

Originally from Rwanda, Faustin Ntamushobora (Ph.D, Biola University) is President and CEO of Transformational Leadership in Africa (TLAfrica, Inc.) and Director of the Institute for the Study of African Realities at African International University (AIU) in Nairobi, Kenya. In his latest book, *Transformation Through the Different Other: A Rendezvous of Giving and Receiving*, he chronicles the problem of the human heart, the gap separating each of us and the different other, and the transforming work of Jesus Christ. Ntamushobora provides an African perspective on issues of injustice, racism, ethnic conflict, and violations of human rights. He has seen firsthand the power of the Word of God as it transcends culture, working with his fellow Rwandan brothers and sisters as they begin to heal from trauma suffered in the genocide. Ntamushobora has seen God apply His healing power to the hearts and minds of his fellow African brothers and sisters and provides a set of guidelines for all of us to learn from one another. This book is especially timely in the wake of the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, April 7, 2014.

Ntamushobora defines the different other (that is, people who are different from us) by explaining that “instead of the other constituting exclusion, the other becomes a continuation of myself” (p. xviii). We discover who we are in community. According to Ntamushobora, “the more one is exposed to the different other, the more he or she has opportunities to be sharpened – but this begins with intentional willingness to be sharpened by the other” (p. 93). This desire to learn from the different other requires a vulnerability to admit that we do not have all the answers and that we need each other to see the whole of what God is doing in the world around us. “Intercultural exposures are invisible books with invisible truths touching invisible places of the mind and heart, making the person exposed grow through experiences that bring lasting transformation” (Ntamushobora, 2013, p. 93).

Ntamushobora (2013) challenges the reader to realize that sometimes the only way we experience a paradigm shift in our worldview is through a disorientating dilemma. Learning something new can be a fearful endeavor for some, but the author encourages us that “once we know the new person and see the truth about his or her reality, fear is transformed” (p. 87). In addition, Ntamushobora takes us beyond Descartes’ declaration of “I think, therefore I am” to a deeper understanding of community with Ubuntu theology that declares, “You are, therefore I am.” Ubuntu theology is “a person is a person through other persons” (p. 78). By applying the principles of Ubuntu theology, Ntamushobora emboldens us to realize that what hurts one of us, hurts all of us.

The book ends with ten practical principles of transformation through the different other:

Principle One: As you plan to meet people from a different race, tribe, or worldview, remember that people all over the world are fallen like you, struggling with the same problems of self-gratification. The human heart is deceitful above all things and beyond all cure!

Principle Two: A human being has the capacity to consume or commune with another human being. While it is true that the heart can be deceitful beyond measure, the opposite can also be true: the heart of the different other can be a blessing to one’s growth, becoming a continuation of me – an inclusion that makes “I” and “You” a community of two different interdependent hearts capable of sharpening each other. This is possible because only life can shape life.

Principle Three: An uneasy relationship with the different other could lead to maturity in Christ. God may allow you to go through uneasy times when relating with the different other or a different environment for his glory and for your good.

Principle Four: Human beings are powerless to bring transformation into their own lives. Transformation only comes when we allow the Holy Spirit’s light to reveal things about our heart that we need to know. Then we can understand how we have fallen short of God’s glory, repent and confess our sin, and allow new perspectives to germinate – perspectives that deepen our love for God and for others.

Principle Five: Knowing that the different other brings transformation is not enough. Change happens when we know the truth, and that knowledge sinks into our heart until it moves us to new actions. It is important that we purposefully set out to know new truths and new people in an authentic and emotional way, so that we resist only gathering mind knowledge of others.

Principle Six: The different other can be transformative only if we allow him or her to sharpen us. This means that we need to open our heart to the different other. This requires trust – or taking a risk. When we open up to the different other and vice versa, a rendezvous of giving and receiving takes place in both lives, and both lives become transformed. The trust, acceptance,

and care for each other that results from this rendezvous creates a space not just for personal growth, but also for emotional healing, especially when one notices that “not everyone different from me is against me.” This is the kind of healing that expands into communities and brings healing throughout a nation.

Principle Seven: Relating with the different other is difficult. The relationship does not even guarantee that it will lead to transformation. Rather than leading to healing, it may lead to hurting. In this case, the cross becomes a healing place where those with broken hearts can meet and receive inner surgery through forgiveness. Even in these circumstances, though, a person’s heart has the chance to connect more deeply to God’s love as well as become mature, and thus more durable for future bumps on the road to loving community.

Principle Eight: The Lord is seeking people who can serve as bridges for a rendezvous of giving and receiving that he is intentionally creating through globalization. People can become bridges when they are ready to change from “I am” to “we are” and from “my” to “our.” They are those who are open to accept the other as their extension. These are the people who will become global peacemakers. However, these global peacemakers should not compromise the truth of the Word of God for the sake of adjusting to the world. As peacemakers following the example of Christ, grace and truth should always kiss each other in our relationship with the different other.

Principle Nine: Churches and Christian institutions that are hesitant to accept the different other may be surprised when circumstances insist that they accommodate the different others because of globalization. It may not be the most constructive context for these institutions to grow if they are compelled by external factors to live with different others. But if this is the case, openness to the Holy Spirit will help the leaders of these institutions navigate unfamiliar and seemingly scary waters. God certainly uses external factors – but as the Israelites in the desert learned, change of heart this way can mean a longer and more difficult journey. Let us seek where the Holy Spirit is working now!

Principle Ten: Relating with the different other is the best way for believers to prepare themselves for the time when every tongue and every tribe and every race will stand together, singing praises to the Lamb of God who was slain for the redemption of every person from every nation. Relating with the different other is God’s will and intent. Let us prepare for such a time, then, and seek God’s glory through loving the different other!

After reading this insightful book, I came to realize that, as people from different perspectives share time and experiences, we have the opportunity to be transformed by any new knowledge gained. Thus, our learning from the different other must begin by building authentic relationships that provide space for difficult conversations and new ways of responding and accepting others, as cross-cultural breakthroughs become the new normal. I would encourage cross-cultural workers, students planning to work in unfamiliar settings, professors and teachers who desire to demonstrate a level of cultural competency rarely seen in some academic circles, and anyone who desires to expand their understanding of Ubuntu theology in their everyday life to devour this power-packed book— *Transformation Through the Different Other: A Rendezvous of Giving and Receiving*.



TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE DIFFERENT OTHER: A RENDEZVOUS OF GIVING AND RECEIVING

Faustin Ntamushobora, PhD

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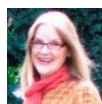
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FAUSTIN NTAMUSHOBORA

Trained by his father to be a tribal priest, Faustin became a follower of Christ after witnessing the transformation of his mother into a woman of extreme grace by Jesus Christ. His faith and that of his wife, Salome, were further deepened in Christian colleges in Congo, Rwanda and Kenya. Their faith was intensely refined during the genocide of 1994 and afterward when they lost relatives in the war in Congo in 1997. Surprising opportunities arose for Faustin to serve with African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM) which led ultimately to him earning a Ph.D. in Educational Studies at Biola University in California and to found Transforming Leaders Africa (tlafrica.com), which exists to come alongside African pastors to encourage their personal transformation and to provide tools for them to encourage the transformation of brothers and sisters in their churches.. Faustin and Salome’s four children are all pursuing higher education: Pelagie earned a BA at Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya; Jean Pierre studies at Moody Bible Institute; Jean Paul has been accepted to the University of Texas, Arlington (UTA); Gentile studies nursing in Forth Worth, Texas.



KAY HENRY

Kay is office manager at Biola University’s School of Education and is presently pursuing her Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies at Biola University. She is passionate about celebrating diversity and new beginnings since her walk with Jesus began at age 38. She grew up in rural Nebraska and holds a bachelor’s degree from Doane College (Crete, Nebraska). Kay moved to Los Angeles as a single mom of three in her early twenties. Kay’s research interests include issues of race and ethnicity, challenges faced by multiracial families, and learning about the theology of Ubuntu as it relates to the importance of community.